







Sarah B Postell

1857.

SERMONS.

BY



WILLARD PRESTON, D.D.,

LATE PASTOR OF THE

INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.

WITH A

Biographical Sketch of the Author.

BY

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TO THE
INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
AND CONGREGATION,
SAVANNAH,

This Selection from the Discourses

OF HIM,
WHO FOR NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY,

BROKE TO THEM THE BREAD OF LIFE,

IS RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

HIS SURVIVING FAMILY.



EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE wishes of an affectionate people, mourning the recent loss of a faithful pastor, whose connection with them had been characterized by mutual and ever-increasing love and respect, to the last hour of his life, cannot be regarded by his surviving family otherwise than as authoritative commands. It is in compliance with such wishes that these volumes of Sermons have been compiled, and are now presented to the people of their author's late charge, and to the public.

The difficulty of selecting from the very large collection of manuscripts left by the deceased pastor, a limited number for publication, has been greatly enhanced by the vast variety of subjects treated of, and the uniform degree of excellence which they present, as well as by the brevity of the time, the longest allowed by circumstances for the completion of the work. The editor can hardly indulge the hope that he has, in all cases, made the best possible selection, or that the better judgment of one more competent to the task would entirely coincide with his own. His anxiety on this score, however, is in some measure reassured by the consciousness that he has earnestly endeavored to discharge the trust committed to him in a manner worthy of the author, and satisfactory to those whose affectionate regard for him has prompted to the work.

One rule which has been observed in the compilation of the Discourses contained in these volumes, has been to exclude all

such as were chiefly devoted to denominational or sectarian subjects, of which there are indeed but few, and to present only such as would be received by evangelical Christians, of whatever name. It is believed that in them is preached, clearly and fully, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That they are eminently practical in their bearing, and personal in their application, those who sat under the preaching of their author need not to be assured.

Asking indulgence for any imperfections which may be apparent in the portion of the work for which he is responsible, the editor commits the volumes to the church and congregation who have requested their publication, in the sincere hope that they may ever prove a pleasing memento of him who for so many years ministered to them in the Gospel, and that the revelations of eternity may show that their publication was not in vain.

J. W. P.

March, 1857.

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SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF REV. WILLARD PRESTON, D.D.

THE subject of this memoir was born in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, May 29, 1785. He was the youngest but one of a family of six sons and six daughters. His father was a substantial farmer; a man of strong, energetic mind, great uprightness and integrity of character, and of extensive usefulness in the community generally, and in the Church, of which he was an officer for many years. His mother, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Hart, was a lady of unusual sprightliness of mind and sweetness of manner, joined to a cheerful and consistent piety, which made her a universal favorite and the idol of her family. Willard, the subject of this memoir, seems to have inherited the strong logical mind of his father, and the brilliant wit and playful humor of his mother, united with the most exquisite sensitiveness and sensibility of temperament. He was the pet child of his parents and the delight of his older brothers and sisters. Though he was possessed of an ardent and sanguine temper, his childhood was marked by docility and unquestioning obedience to his parents and teachers, and by a susceptibility to religious impressions which would almost warrant the conclusion that his conversion took place at an early period of life. If a childhood and youth of unsullied purity, and a most conscientious observance of the Sabbath and religious duties, are any ground for such a conclusion in any case, it might surely be admitted in this instance. It was not, however, till after the completion of his collegiate course

that his convictions of duty became so clear and urgent as to lead to an entire change of his pursuits and purposes of life. At an early age he gave indications of superior intelligence and intellect. His love of study and proficiency in the branches then taught in village schools, led his father to place him under the tuition of Rev. Dr. Crane, the parish minister of Northbridge, where his father then resided, preparatory to giving him a collegiate education. His preceptor enjoyed a wide popularity as a teacher of youth, and had the honor of training some of the master minds, which within the last half century have shone as bright luminaries in the Church. Among these may be mentioned the Rev. Dr. Spring, of New York, and the Rev. Dr. Hawes, of Hartford.

After due preparation, he entered Brown University, where his course was marked by propriety of conduct, close application to study, and the development of mind of no common order. There, too, his passionate love of music was indulged and cultivated, and by his fine voice and great skill on the violoncello, he became an important auxiliary to the college choir, of which he was a leader. His love of music was never lost, and was a source of enjoyment not only to himself, but to his family and friends.

He graduated with one of the highest honors of his class, in September, 1806, and with the restless energy and characteristic promptness which ever urged him forward to the accomplishment of any purpose he had formed, he returned to his father's house only to prepare to leave it, and enter at once upon his professional studies. Law was the profession to which he had looked forward and directed his preparatory reading; and the week after his graduation found him a student in the office of the Hon. Sylvanus Backus, of Pomfret, Connecticut, a gentleman distinguished for his great amiability and urbanity, and none the less for his professional attainments.

Here, while devoting himself with assiduity to the study of this noble science, it is believed that the claims of a law, higher and nobler, were set home on his conscience. His religious

impressions revived, and that all-important change was effected which led him to seek a profession more congenial to the newly-awakened desires of his heart, and to devote himself to the service of his God, in the work of the Gospel ministry.

Accordingly, in the spring of 1807, he left the office of Mr. Backus, and went to New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he engaged as preceptor of a select school for young ladies. On the 3d of May he made his first public profession of religion, and united with the Dutch Reformed Church, then under the pastoral care of Rev. Ira Condit, D.D. With him he soon after commenced the study of theology, preparatory to that sacred work to which he believed he had been called by the Spirit of all Truth, operating on his soul, and causing him to prefer its solemn and self-denying labors to the honors and emoluments which he might have hoped to win in the practice of a secular profession. His studies were continued under the direction of the Rev. Samuel Stearns, of Bedford, Massachusetts, and by him he was presented to the Andover Association for licensure, and was accepted.

His first labors in the ministry were in Hallowell, Maine, where he produced a favorable impression, and was considered a young man of extraordinary promise. The character of his sermons from his earliest ministry was eminently evangelical and sound in the faith; but in his youth not so severely logical as in later years. His earlier style was embellished with much that was poetic, but never abounded in illustration. That style, so popular at the present day, was then almost unknown in the sturdy school of New England theology. The simplicity, comprehensiveness, and unction of his public devotional exercises, were very remarkable; and he was once surprised and humbled on being asked by an aged minister, for whom he had preached, "*What books of devotion he had studied?*"

In the fall of 1808 he visited a sister residing in Vermont, and was invited to supply the pulpit of the Calvinistic Congregational Church, in Burlington, in that State, and to become its pastor permanently. This proposition his feeble

health compelled him to decline, and to seek a more genial climate.

In the following summer he again visited New Jersey, reviving and strengthening the friendships formed while a resident of New Brunswick, some of which were of a strong and tender nature, and were cherished through life. It is pleasant to remember that he was permitted, in its last year, to revisit those scenes and friends endeared by so many fond recollections.

After preaching a few Sabbaths to destitute churches in New Jersey, he extended his journey to Philadelphia, where he preached under the auspices of the venerable Dr. Ashbel Green, and was instructed and encouraged by his paternal counsels and commendations.

The succeeding winter and year were spent in Virginia, in the families of Hon. John Taliaferro and Hon. James M. Garnet, as the tutor of the son and daughter of the latter, stately preaching in a church consecrated to Episcopal worship, and to an auditory composed of such as piety or courtesy induced to attend the ministry of the youthful preacher. His congregation, though numerically small, was intellectually such as to tax to the utmost his mental and literary resources. This will be readily conceded, when, in addition to those who have been named, such men as Samuel L. Southard and John Randolph, of Roanoke, were sometimes of the number. Nor were motives wanting to inspire a zeal for the spiritual good of his hearers, which, it is believed, were felt, and that many humble and teachable minds were fed with the pure milk of the Word.

It was here, amid the fascinations of southern social life, that he imbibed that love of the customs and characters of the South which made him essentially a southern man, and fitted him especially for the sphere to which the Providence of God assigned his later years—a sphere so congenial to his early and enduring prepossessions.

Soon after his return to New England, in 1811, he was united in marriage, at Northbridge, Massachusetts, to Lucy

Maria Baker, fourth daughter of Joseph Baker, M.D., of Brooklyn, Connecticut, and Lucy Devotion, his wife, of Puritan descent on the part of the father, and of Huguenot on that of the mother. By this union he had nine children, seven of whom survive their lamented father.

A short time after his marriage he became the pastor of the Congregational Church, in St. Alban's, Vermont. His ordination took place on the 8th of January, 1812. Here he continued till declining health, caused by the severity of the climate, made a removal necessary to one more mild. His pastoral relation to that devoted people was dissolved in September, 1815. The ties which bound him to them were of no ordinary nature. They were his first love as a church, and never was a church more worthy the love and gratitude of a pastor. The strength of their attachment was shown by their desire to have the relation renewed; two distinct invitations having been given him again to become their pastor. But though circumstances prevented his second settlement among them, it was a source of great comfort and pleasure to him to believe that the bond which united their hearts to his was never broken. This was proved by many affecting incidents, especially during his last visit to them in 1851, when he was hailed with the liveliest demonstrations of love by those who still survived, and by the children of those who had been called from earth. With them he visited the graves of their parents and loved ones, and mingled with theirs tears of affection to the memory of those who had been the dear friends of his younger days, and with whom he had "taken sweet counsel and walked to the house of God in company." It may be proper to add, that such was the effect on the minds of the people, by the removal of their pastor, that the last sermon he delivered to them was apparently blessed by the Holy Spirit to the conversion of many, and was followed by an interesting revival.

In June following he received a call from the Pacific Congregational Church, in Providence, R. I., a small remnant of a church which had been rent by doctrinal differences, the larger

portion holding the Arminian faith, and forming what is now a large and evangelical church in that city. His labors with that people, though short, received tokens of the Divine approbation, in an interesting revival, in which the students of the University shared,—some of whom are now shining lights in the Church, and honored instruments of diffusing the Gospel in heathen lands.

He was dismissed from that church at his own request, in 1821, and in August of the next year was installed over the Calvinistic Congregational Church in Burlington, Vt., the same field to which he had been invited earlier in his ministry. This relation, though mutually happy, was destined to be of short duration. Their former pastor, the Rev. Daniel Haskell, had been called to the Presidency of Vermont University, and now, by a calamitous visitation of Providence, was rendered incapable of discharging his official duties. The church was, therefore, again called upon to resign their pastor to fill the vacant office. Mr. Preston entered on the duties of the Presidency in April, 1825. Shortly after his inauguration, the great and good La Fayette assisted in laying the corner-stone of a new college edifice, erected on the site of one consumed by fire the year before, almost simultaneously with the first appearance of the malady which deprived the institution of the valuable services of Dr. Haskell.

Owing to adverse influences, chiefly growing out of cases of discipline, Mr. Preston resigned the office in 1826. President Wheeler, in his "Historical Sketch" of his predecessors, Presidents of the University of Vermont, says: "Dr. Preston was connected with the college for so short a time, that little can be said respecting his actual or prospective influence. He was a man remarkable for his gentlemanly and elegant bearing, of simple, genial, and artistic tastes; and in the discharge of his public duties, secured, at once, the love and admiration of students and of others."

In the fall of 1826, Mr. Preston removed to Philadelphia, without any special charge, but supplying, as his health permitted, vacant pulpits, and often assisting the venerable and

learned Dr. James P. Wilson, of the First Presbyterian Church, whose declining health made such occasions of frequent occurrence, and sometimes for several successive Sabbaths.

In the winter of 1828-29, the entire prostration of his health induced him, with the urgent recommendation of his physician and other friends, to make trial of the climate of the South; and in March, 1829, he sailed for Savannah, where he arrived on the 2d day of April. After a sojourn of only a few days, making the acquaintance of several Christian gentlemen, and particularly that of the then pastor and several of the elders of the Independent Presbyterian Church, he left for the upper portion of the State of Georgia. His letters were from his friends in Virginia to gentlemen in Powelton, where he spent his first summer, and whose dry and balmy atmosphere had a healing and renovating effect on his wasted health. He preached as occasion presented, and also took charge of an academy in that village. In the autumn of the same year, he was invited to Milledgeville, to supply the pulpit of the Presbyterian church, and assume the charge of a large academy for both sexes.

Here, his family having joined him, he spent the year; but as it was not his purpose as yet to locate himself or to assume permanent relations, he removed, at the close of the year 1830, to Madison, Morgan County, where the double duties devolved on him in the care of both a church and an academy.

In the fall of 1831, an invitation was given him to remove to another field of labor in the same section of the State. But the conditions on which his acceptance depended had not been complied with, when he received from the Eldership of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, an invitation to visit them and preach, with a view to permanent settlement, should there be mutual satisfaction. With this he complied, and preached his first sermon before that people, December 25, 1831, and on the 14th of January following, received a unanimous call from the Session and Trustees to become their pastor.

This he accepted, and began his pastoral labors in Savannah, in January, 1832. And here he entered into a field which he

cultivated with unfaltering vigor and industry for nearly a quarter of a century, comprising more than half of his ministerial life, and continuing until his earthly labors closed.

For this field he seems to have been peculiarly fitted and prepared in the Providence of God, by his education, manners, piety, experience, temperament, and habits of industry. He at once addressed himself to the onerous labors before him, with a zeal and earnestness which never relaxed, until his heart ceased to beat; carrying with him and increasing the confidence and affection of his important charge from the beginning to the very last day of his life, which was suddenly closed.

His charge was a laborious and responsible one, and his history illustrates strikingly the value of the faithful minister to the Church and community, and the burden of cares and anxieties devolving on him. The infidel, who sneeringly objects to the bad political economy of supporting the Christian ministry, as being consumers and not producers, would stand rebuked, on a candid survey of the life of Dr. Preston.

His congregation was among the largest, most refined, and intellectual, in the Southern States. His extended acquaintance brought him into communion personally and by correspondence, almost daily, with a large number of strangers, who sought information and counsel on a great variety of subjects. None except those intimately associated with a long-settled pastor, can estimate the burden of calls and duties pressing on him from a thousand sources.

His ordinary public labors consisted of three public services on the Sabbath; a weekly lecture; and an almost invariable attendance on a weekly congregational prayer meeting. These labors were interrupted only by the omission, during the summer season, of one of his Sabbath services: for he rarely accepted of the summer vacation usually given by city churches to their pastors. And such was his devotion to his people, that for seven years consecutively at one time, he never left the city except for some occasional ministerial call abroad.

Besides a laborious attention to parochial visiting, and administering consolation to the afflicted and sorrowing around him,

he was often called on to visit the sick-beds of stranger invalids, who every winter resorted in crowds to the city from abroad. So deeply was he affected with the situation of lonely and afflicted strangers at the public and other boarding-houses, that he is said often to have taken the rounds of the hotels, to ascertain whether there were within any unfriended sick strangers needing religious counsels. Here he would be found acting the good Samaritan, administering personally to their physical wants, or interesting others in their cases, and directing the sufferer to the Great Physician of souls; and many will bless God through all eternity for those soothing and timely visits.

In addition to giving full instruction to his enlightened congregation, by his ordinary pulpit labors, he prepared and delivered, on different occasions, several courses of lectures on special topics, greatly to their edification. A course of able lectures on the Organization and Polity of the Christian Church, especially interested and instructed his hearers, in which, whilst opposing the views of other brethren, his manner was so gentle, and his spirit so catholic, that none seemed to take offence; thus showing that controversy may be conducted in a Christian manner that will not sunder or hinder the affections of Christian communities. One has said, "A man may innocently be drawn into a religious controversy, but who has innocently come out of it?" He, perhaps, came as near as any one ever did to giving a satisfactory affirmative reply to the question.

He was firm in his religious views, and perfectly frank in the avowal of them. But these opinions were held without dogmatism, and uttered in a spirit of Christian charity, so that an opponent would love the man, even where the argument failed to carry conviction.

His manners were so winning and affectionate, that his presence was always hailed with delight by the old and young, the exalted and the humble. He was ever accessible to the child and the stranger, and all came to him without reserve, for he had an open ear to the tale of suffering and distress. There was an unusual blending of the dignity of the Christian gentle-

man and minister with the native unaffected gentleness of the child, in the character and manner of Dr. Preston, admirably adapted to the calling of the Christian minister. He seemed never to forget his high profession—never to forget that his work was to serve God and humanity. And hence, while he could stoop to the lowliest, there was no compromising of the seemliness of his station.

There was a sublime exhibition of his Christian heroism, self-denial, and benevolence, during the prevalence of yellow fever in Savannah, in the summer of 1854. Disease and death were abroad in their most appalling forms, mowing down the people. The citizens who could leave were fleeing in all directions from the remorseless scourge; and his parishioners begging him for their sake, and for that of his church and family, to flee with them from the threatening danger. Like a faithful sentinel he nobly stood by his post; preferring to risk life rather than desert the suffering and the dying. The soldier may brave the sudden onset of the battle-field, sustained by a love of glory, and maddened into fury by the cruelty of his foe; but to follow the philanthropist, even in old age, as he unselfishly threads the streets and lanes of a city, under burning suns by day and noxious damps by night, for weeks and months in succession, amid revolting and heart-sickening scenes of disease and pain, in order to do good to the souls and bodies of men; watching by the dying through long nights of suffering, and then following them to their last resting-place, and returning to soothe the bereaved survivor: this is to witness one of the very highest achievements of valor. And such was the scene the aged pastor encountered. In the mean time he was called on to close the dying eyes of his eldest son—a gifted and accomplished scholar—and to lie down himself in the fearful embraces of the formidable pestilence, and to struggle for days, in his old age, in a doubtful issue between life and death. This is one chapter of his pastoral experience.

A few extracts from his correspondence will furnish a glimpse of his sufferings and endurance during the memorable presence of this pestilence, and show the man and the Christian minis-

ter better than any words can describe. In his daily journal to a loved one of his own household, he says, "Writing to you so often and fully is a pleasure, though, indeed, a melancholy one. It is my chief employment at night; and after the fatigues of the day, it is a relief to recount to you its chief incidents; but the sorrow and astonishment with which you will be overwhelmed in reading the sad record is a great drawback on the satisfaction of telling you everything which affects me. But, my dear —, be not over-anxious; let us put our trust in God, and possess our souls in peace. Pray, indeed, but do not faint. I may take the epidemic and die, though I have not as yet felt the slightest apprehension in visiting the sick and the dying and attending funerals." "If the entreaties of friends could have influenced me, I would long since have left the city. But the *still voice* of duty has prevailed, and I trust *will prevail*, over that of friendship and the warmest earthly affection. I may, indeed, be the next victim, but I have no more fears than if unusual health prevailed. If I die, may it be in the faithful discharge of my duty; and *it is* my duty to remain with the sick, the dying, and the afflicted. Your sympathy in my labors and trials is most grateful, but I am chiefly concerned how you will bear the terrible details, which have become so familiar to me that I have almost ceased to be astonished at anything. No more awful scenes, it seems to me, can occur, than I have already witnessed. I have to-day been so constantly engaged, and withal so distressed on account of poor —, that I hardly know what I wrote to you of this day's occurrences, in the letter which I mailed this afternoon." "I have visited to-day some twenty families, ministering in different ways to their necessities and comfort. I am often with the sick and dying till long after midnight, and then return to my solitary room for rest, but scarcely for repose. I am sometimes amazed at the scenes I have witnessed, and the part I have borne in them. It is indeed a wonder unto many that I and mine are yet spared, surrounded as we have been by some of the most malignant cases, and as much exposed by contact with them as it is possible to be." "I have struggled with

those who were struggling with death, and when the fearful contest was past, have closed the eyes and composed the limbs of the poor victims; and, with the assistance of a servant, dressed the body for the grave, and have been one of the two or three who have borne and committed it to its narrow house. I have cheerfully borne separation from my family, for the reason that they are safe (as I trust) from the sight and ravages of this awful pestilence. But yet I am well in body, and all ours are yet spared. For which let us be sincerely thankful, and let it silence all your excessive fears, and lead you to put your trust in God." Such language and conduct need no comment. They make their way at once to the heart.

The amount of his labors at this time is almost incredible. His correspondence through the whole period of his greatest labors was voluminous, not only with the members of his scattered family, but with his people, dispersed in every part of the country, all anxious for information that could be relied on; and where he could not in person administer consolation to the bereaved, his pen was employed in the mournful office. The number of letters he wrote in those few weeks (more than a hundred, and many of these containing two or more large sheets, closely written) is truly astonishing, especially when taken in connection with his engrossing labors and anxieties.

As a preacher, Dr. Preston's sermons were logical and argumentative, rather than pathetic; but they were strictly evangelical in spirit. His divisions were natural and happy; his style, especially in advancing life, was almost severe in its simplicity, but lucid as the light of day. He felt that the pulpit was not the appropriate place to show off the flowers of rhetoric, or to please the imagination, any further than these ornaments can be made ancillary to religious advancement. He felt that the messenger from heaven had too serious a work before him, simply to divert and amuse his hearers.

His topics for pulpit presentation were chosen from subjects that led him to discuss great vital doctrines and practical duties. He had no taste for strange texts to make the people stare, or for odd and startling exhibitions to excite surprise

rather than to do good. He had no liking for philological abstractions, or for topics unsuited to the pulpit; evils, which it is greatly to be feared, are eating out the very vitals of the piety of many a church. He did not encourage or gratify the "itching ear," for he considered the Gospel message as designed, not for diversion, but for the renovation of the heart and the reformation of the life. In his night lectures he came nearer to the heart, and fed the people of God with the richest food of experimental piety.

His delivery was usually calm and unimpassioned. There was, however, a subdued earnestness of manner that held the attention of the hearer to the close. He rarely rose to a lofty eloquence, yet never fell to a point where he failed to interest his audience.

His enunciation was so deliberate and distinct, though with no great body of voice, that he made himself heard with ease by the most remote hearer in his large and capacious church; which building, we may remark by the way, after all the modern attempts at improvement in church architecture, is probably, in its interior, the most graceful, chaste, and imposing structure in the nation, for Christian worship.

Dr. Preston read the Scriptures and sacred hymns in public worship, with great solemnity, dignity, and power. He had a happy and forcible manner in giving public notices from the pulpit,—a strangely rare pulpit attainment, and yet one by no means to be despised by those who would save their congregations from vexatious mistakes and perplexity.

He was peculiarly felicitous in improving providential occurrences, and his apt and appropriate funeral addresses were often most affecting and impressive. In the house of mourning and sorrow, his presence was that of a ministering angel, soothing, comforting, and instructing. His gentleness and sympathy banished all reserve, and made the sufferer feel that a brother's heart was with him.

His private and social intercourse with the families of his church, was of the most attractive and pleasing character. His courteous and urbane manners, his cheerfulness, gentleness, and

playful humor, made him the most delightful of companions. All longed to see the "dear pastor," old and young, and in his presence the brow of care relaxed, and the burdened heart found relief.

His occasional preaching from home, was always a season of interest to the community visited. He always left behind him, on his return from these visits, a strong impression of his learning, piety, and ability as a preacher. He received the degree of D.D. from the trustees of the State University of Georgia; a mark of respect, which if always equally deserved would constitute an honorable distinction as a just tribute to scholarly, theological learning; but which unfortunately has lost its significance in its indiscriminate distribution.

To sum up all, Dr. Preston was a man of rare gifts for the pastoral office, and few men have been able to take so strong and enduring a hold on the confidence and affections of so large a flock.

But the enjoyment of the labors of such a minister, like all earthly blessings, is a boon given only for a season, and must come to its close.

Subsequently to his recovery from the yellow fever, he was left, for months, in a languid state. In compliance with the importunities of his anxious flock, he travelled for a season. His system rallied, and he was restored to his usual health. He engaged again, with his wonted zeal, in his arduous labors.

On Sabbath, the 20th of April, 1856, he preached a solemn discourse from the text, Isaiah 38 : 1, "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." It was so earnest and affecting as to attract the special attention of many, and to elicit the remark from a number, that he seemed to be giving his parting counsels. On Saturday morning of that week (26th) he rose apparently in strong health. After breakfast he made some calls, and attended a meeting of the Georgia Baptist State Convention, then in annual session in Savannah. Late in the afternoon he entertained some visitors at his house, in his usual cheerful manner. Shortly after they retired, he was suddenly seized, about 7 o'clock P. M., with a paralysis of

the heart, was carried to his bed, and, after a short and painful struggle, expired, in the 71st year of his age. The veteran Christian soldier laid down his bright and burnished armor, and went to his rest.

The mournful intelligence, like an electrical shock, spread rapidly through the community. The whole city were mourners. It seemed as if every family had lost a beloved inmate. Many a manly face, unused to weeping, was bedewed with tears.

The funeral was one of those touching, eloquent, and overwhelming tributes, which royalty might envy; which nothing but solid worth ever draws forth—the spontaneous outburst of grief, which honors a long life of earnest devotion to duty—the unbought and priceless suffrage of veneration and love.

On Monday, the 28th, the Independent Presbyterian Church was the point that concentrated the hearts of all the citizens, for all that was mortal of the old and beloved pastor lay confined there, amid the mourning crowd and the emblems of sorrow. They were about to carry away forever to the cold grave a venerable form, that had been seen for long years, moving along those busy streets, and within those habitations, on errands of love and mercy. The Baptist Convention, after passing touching resolutions of sympathy and condolence with the bereaved family and flock, had adjourned to do honor to the memory of departed worth. The spacious house was crowded to its utmost capacity, whilst a vast throng was left without.

A solemn and impressive discourse on the life and character of the deceased, was delivered by the Rev. J. P. Tustin, of the Baptist Church.

The following was the order of the funeral services.

The body being removed to the church at 3 o'clock, attended by the family of the deceased, the members of the Session, and trustees of the church, the services began at half-past 3 o'clock, and were conducted in the following order, viz. :

1st. Prayer, by Rev. D. H. Porter, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. 2d. Funeral hymn, read by Rev. C. B. King, of the Presbyterian Church. 3d. Reading of the Scriptures, by Rev. Mr. Keys, of the Methodist Church of Savannah.

4th. Hymn, read by Rev. Mr. Clarke, Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, Savannah. 5th. Sermon, by Rev. J. P. Tustin, of Charleston, late pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Savannah. 6th. Closing prayer, by Rev. Mr. Karn, pastor of the Lutheran Church, Savannah. The services at the grave were performed by Rev. C. W. Rogers, of the Presbyterian Church. A suitable discourse was also delivered on a subsequent Sabbath, to the afflicted flock, by Rev. Mr. Rogers; and a series of resolutions was signed at a meeting of the ministers, representing nearly all the religious denominations in the city, expressive of their profound sense of the irreparable loss to the community, and of their strong appreciation of his superior merits as a man, a Christian, and a pastor.

We cannot close this sketch more suitably than by quoting the language of one of the Savannah journals of the day, giving a summary estimate of the man. "In the character of Dr. Preston we have a bright example of the devoted Christian and faithful minister. His whole soul was absorbed with the care of his flock, and there was no duty so arduous as to cause him to shrink from its performance. In health he was their companion and friend, in sickness a minister of consolation and grace, in death a chief mourner of the departed, and a comforter of the bereaved. No pastor was ever more loved by his people while living, and none more deeply regretted when dead."

Sermons.

I.

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST ALONE.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—Acts 4:12.

THE whole context shows that these words refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the doctrine which they teach is, that his Gospel furnishes the only scheme of salvation. It is therefore entirely exclusive in its character and claims. Its precepts and doctrines, its motives and sanctions, are peculiar to itself. It admits no compromise with any other scheme, and denounces a fearful anathema against him who shall preach any other Gospel. “Though we, or an angel from heaven,” says Paul, “preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” And so jealous was its divine Author of its claims, that in closing the sacred canon he has declared, “If any man shall add to, or take from it, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book, and take away his part out of

the Book of Life." Such are the awful guards which he has placed around his own scheme of salvation, as contained in this sacred volume.

To show the justness of these high claims is the object of this discourse. The arguments in the case are indeed numerous. But we shall derive them from two general considerations.

I. That no other scheme has ever been devised or suggested, which is not manifestly *untenable, unsatisfactory, and absurd*.

II. That the Gospel scheme is, in all its provisions, just such as to meet the necessities of men, and commend itself to universal belief and acceptance.

The salvation of sinners is certainly not a self-evident truth. It is not a matter of course. On the contrary, all solid hope must rest on some principle or provision, which is known and *felt* to be adapted and adequate. Mankind must have something which they call religion—something on which to place their hopes for eternity; and in their extremity, that something must have a solid foundation, or what they *regard* as such, or they will sink into despair.

Man has been denominated a religious being; and in the sense above stated, he is so.

But the salvation of the Gospel, its nature, and its claims, and the conditions on which it alone can be secured, are such that its very proposal awakens opposition in the carnal mind of man, and when pressed on his acceptance, calls forth his enmity. "For the

carnal mind is enmity against God." It is not wonderful, therefore, that human ingenuity, thus prompted by enmity, should have sought out many inventions, and devised various schemes as substitutes for that of the Gospel. Yet they may all be resolved into what has been called *natural religion*, or the *religion of reason*, in contradistinction from that of revelation. But let us see how far that scheme can satisfy *reason itself*.

Here, at the very outset, we are met with a difficulty, which, if not absolutely inextricable, we shall at least find it hard to escape from. Is it a truth that there *is* a *future* and an *eternal* state of existence? Is not death man's last end?—the utter extinction of his being? Put out the light of revelation—banish all that you have learned from this book—and then let the question be propounded, Is there a future and an eternal state of existence to man? And how will you answer that question? Can unaided reason satisfactorily settle it? Reason can find arguments enough to support an affirmative answer when the fact is once made known. But, without a revelation, could it have ascertained that fact?

We are acquainted with man only in a state of *union of soul and body*. When we see death dissolving that union, and, as his hand presses heavily on the body, witness also its prostrating influence on the mind, could we, without a revelation, be *certain* that the soul survives the shock? Would not reason itself rather draw the conclusion that, at the death of the

body, the soul itself becomes extinct? We think it could not infer the contrary. And hence, the gloomy doctrine of nihilism prevailed among the most enlightened of the ancient heathen philosophers. The soul's immortality was no more than conjecture with even Socrates. The martyrdom, as it has been called, which he suffered, was not for maintaining that doctrine. He did advance the idea that there was, or might be, but *one* Being entitled to the character of *supreme*—a sentiment, indeed, which aimed a death-blow at the Polytheism of the Grecian Empire; and for this he was condemned to drink the fatal hemlock. And how sincere he was, or rather, how little confidence he himself had in that opinion, appears from the fact that after his condemnation, and just as he was placing the fatal poison to his lips, and of course had nothing to fear or hope from his persecutors, he directed his friends to do sacrifice in his behalf to one of the heathen deities.

But suppose the immortality of the soul to be rendered probable, or even certain; by the unaided effort of reason, can reason tell us what the future state of the soul will be?—whether happy or miserable? Manifestly, reason can tell us nothing on this all-important and most interesting point. Here her lips are sealed; her hand cannot lift the veil; her eye cannot penetrate it.

But will it be said that the character of God forbids a conclusion so sad? But whence our *knowledge*

of his character? Reason cannot establish the fact of even the existence of a God. I say *cannot*, because under the most favorable circumstances it never *has done it*. It was the subject of the most prying and untiring investigation for centuries. It was necessarily involved in all the inquiries of ancient heathen philosophers respecting "the *Supreme Good*." But there is no proof—no *hint* that one of them ever pretended to have ascertained the fact of the existence of the true God.

But as the conjecture of one of them, to whom we have already alluded, was certainly founded in *fact*, although he still taught his pupils to adhere to the polytheism of their nation, and (almost) at the moment of his death gave a *practical* denial of such a belief, yet, as the conjecture was certainly founded in fact, let it be conceded that this was an achievement of reason, and the question which naturally arises is, With what attributes would reason clothe the Supreme Being? And here it were enough to show what attributes the wisest men, without a knowledge of revelation, have ascribed to their divinities. Here, too, is another perplexing fact, viz., that scarcely any two of them were *agreed* as to the character of "their lords many, and gods many." They ascribed to them a great variety and diversity of attributes and qualities—from the most partial favoritism, through all the grades of licentiousness, to the most implacable malevolence and revenge. No decent man in Christen-

dom can read the characters of their gods without the deepest abhorrence.

But let it be still farther granted, that reason might have ascertained and ascribed to the Supreme Being the attributes of eternal existence, independence, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. In this case, the idea of an overruling Providence, too, might have been suggested, although actually denied by most of the ancient philosophers, and by none of them agreed how extensive this superintendence was, *only* that the higher order of the gods did not concern themselves with the affairs of this world. But grant all this, and now, manifestly, mankind must sustain important relations to such a Being—relations which must give rise to most important and essential duties. But what can reason teach us respecting these relations and duties? Certainly, that we are his creatures; that, as such, we are dependent beings; that reverence and gratitude are his due. But whether our experience of good were to be ascribed to a superintending Providence, or our own wisdom and sagacity, might, without a revelation, be a question not easily solved.

But what would be the language of reason under the experience of *evil*? Would it enjoin submission? If so, would that submission be voluntary or compelled?—cordial acquiescence or stoical indifference? The latter was the submission which heathen philosophers taught.

It is also the dictate of reason that the Supreme Being is to be worshipped. But in what shall that worship consist? In *mental*—or corporeal acts—or both? and how performed? Questions these, which lie altogether beyond the province of reason to settle. Were it to direct the mode of worship, it would undoubtedly consist in great show, and pomp, and display—in splendid pageantry. If left to the sole guidance of reason, mankind would take all their ideas of propriety on this subject from the respect and honors which are paid to heroes and other distinguished men; only to a *Supreme Being*, the honors to be paid would consist of *supreme display and folly*. And from what *we* know of the true God, by his own revelation, such honors would be *supremely displeasing*. The truth is, while it requires a special revelation to know, in a thousand most important respects, what duties we ought to perform, it requires it, in *every instance*, to teach us the *manner* in which they can be acceptably performed.

But more modern advocates of the sufficiency of reason to prescribe a suitable and sufficient scheme of salvation, have made *repentance* the sole ground of it.

But this presupposes the knowledge of two essentially important things utterly beyond the compass of human reason. The one is that the Supreme Being is a God of *mercy*. For forgiveness of sin, even though it were for the sake of a Mediator, is wholly an act of *mercy*.

All our ideas of the government of God, independently of revelation, must be derived from human governments, only that the former would be more perfect than the latter. All governments are founded on *law*. But *mercy* is not known to *law*. *Justice* is the great distinguishing characteristic of *law*. The exercise of *mercy* implies the *suspension* of *law*, and consequently of *strict justice*. Such an attribute is, indeed, necessary in all human governments. But it arises from their imperfection: the government of God, therefore, would be one of far more rigid laws—yea, of exact and even justice. Hence reason might prove God to be a Being of *justice*, but not of *mercy*. The two attributes are in perfect conflict. They can only be harmonized on the ground of a *special provision*, a knowledge of which requires a *special revelation*.

What now becomes of the notion of repentance, as ground of the sinner's hope? So far as *reason can go*, pardon, on the *ground* of repentance, supposing it to exist, would be impossible.

This suggests the other thing necessary to be known, viz.: that God *would* pardon on repentance. Till this were certain no *motive* to repent could exist. But how was this to be known? For there is no *merit* in repentance. It makes no amends for past disobedience. Reason itself tells us this. Confessedly, this could only be known, as well as the grounds of it, by special, express revelation.

Such, then, for we can dwell no longer on this

point, are the devices and suggestions of reason, placed, too, on *far higher* ground than any achievement reason *has* ever made on this subject. And, if such men as Pythagoras, and Thales, and Socrates, and Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, names which stand for everything great in genius and proud in reason, could produce nothing better than what they did produce, while directing the strongest efforts of their giant minds to that single point, who will contend for the sufficiency of human reason to furnish a safe or adapted plan of salvation?

But if we discard their notions as absurd, and adopt those of Herbert, and Chubb, and Bolingbroke, and Hume, and Voltaire, we are to remember, that while they reject everything that is distinguishing in the word of God, or are *indebted* to that Book for every doctrine that *has* any foundation in truth, they place all the hopes of mankind on the *merit* of repentance, or the indiscriminate exercise of Divine mercy, to the utter disregard of Divine justice. For “a God of such mercy is a God unjust,” a declaration as true as though it fell from the lips of an inspired Apostle.

II. With adoring gratitude we turn to our second train of argument: viz., that the scheme of the Gospel, in all its provisions, commends itself to our fullest belief, and most cordial acceptance.

1. It commends itself to our *reason*. It is true that revelation contains doctrines and facts which reason cannot comprehend, and so do nature and Providence.

Yet while the great plan of redemption, disclosed to us in the Bible, is perfectly intelligible, reason more than assents to it. It approves. A plan, the operations of which should be violative of justice, could never receive the approbation of reason, even in the individual who might be infinitely benefited by it. Had God, for instance, pardoned the sinner whom his law condemned to eternal death, without a satisfaction for his violated laws, the very reason of the pardoned sinner himself could not approve, *must* secretly condemn the plan. However easy and common, too, for men to call that reasonable and right, which promotes their individual interest, or falls in with their selfish wishes, yet there is a sense of justice implanted in the human soul which no interest can suppress, though it might bribe to *silence*.

But the scheme of the Gospel secures and establishes the justice of God on an immovable basis. Every law of his throne is vindicated—yea, “magnified and made honorable.” Paul states this as the glory of the Gospel scheme: “To declare his righteousness, that God may be *just*, and the justifier of him that believeth.” God gave to man a law. The penalty of violating it was eternal death. Man violated it, and incurred the penalty. Had a free pardon been proclaimed without a satisfaction to the claims of injured justice, what would have become of God’s authority, and even truth? Justice would have been sacrificed; and not a being in all his universe would have respected his

authority. But look at the provisions of the Gospel, and a single glance at the *Cross* explains the whole—removes every difficulty and every bar. Justice was satisfied. And O, how strikingly manifested! Nor *mercy* less so. The liveliest gratitude combines with the deepest conviction of justice to exalt the authority and character of God in the view of all the redeemed, while the lips of every reprobate man, or fallen angel, are forever closed. Here justice and mercy, righteousness and peace, unite and harmonize on principles which reason must acknowledge and cannot but approve. It is now consistent, and seen and *felt* to be consistent with all the Divine perfections to save sinners. And there appears to be no other *conceivable* plan which reason, in its candid exercise, could approve.

2. The beautiful harmony of its facts, and precepts, and doctrines, which characterizes the whole Christian scheme, commends it to the unwavering belief and hearty acceptance of every man. The Bible has been studied for eighteen hundred years to find a contradiction in it, but not one has been detected. It has challenged every effort of genius and critical acumen; and every effort has been made, and those which have been thought and proclaimed by infidelity to have been found in it, have been triumphantly proved to have originated in gross ignorance or malicious perverseness. Look at the character it gives of its Author, and the Author of all things. What a glorious

assemblage of perfections it ascribes to him ! If any of his attributes might be supposed to conflict with each other, they are his justice and mercy, in regard to man's eternal destiny. But the provisions of the Gospel have brought them into the sweetest harmony. Man's entire depravity is met by the Spirit's omnipotent influence in the regeneration and sanctification of the sinner's heart. In a word, all the exigencies and miseries consequent on the fall, are amply met by the plan devised and revealed by God himself. It tenders a free and a full salvation to all who will accept it.

3. The salvation which the Gospel proffers is perfectly adapted to the condition of mankind. That condition is one, naturally, of total alienation from God ; of rebellion against his authority—in two words, words never disconnected in their import, a state of *sin* and *misery*. From this state, there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be rescued, but the name of Jesus Christ ; no other remedy which can reach their case, but that which his Gospel furnishes. The highest intellectual cultivation—the most earnest persuasions—the most solemn appeals—all the promised joys of heaven, and all the threatened miseries of perdition, aside from those influences of the Omnipotent Spirit which are secured by no other scheme than that which this Sacred Book contains, cannot subdue the sinner's heart.

This, therefore, is a provision which adapts it to

the condition, the state, the exigencies of every class, and grade, and individual of our fallen race; to the rich and the poor, to the learned and the illiterate—yea, the most degraded, as well as most exalted by their endowments, or by any of the distinctions of human society. As the amplexness, the adaptedness, the efficacy of this provision, or the necessities, the degradation, and wretchedness of any portion of the human family are concerned, these distinctions are not known. All are placed on one level, as guilty and perishing sinners. Sovereign grace alone creates that distinction which secures the approbation of the holy God, or a title to the glories of heaven. All who would secure these blessings must take the humble posture of learners at the feet of Him who spake as never man spake. They must come to Christ as little children—humble, meek, and docile. The Gospel is designed to humble the pride of man, and places all men on a level in regard to salvation. “There is,” as it has been expressed, “no royal way to the favor of God; no monarch saved, because he is a monarch; no philosopher, because he is a philosopher.” The great, the wise, the learned, the rich, have no pre-eminence in this respect over the low, the ignorant, the unlearned, and the poor. All who are saved must accept salvation on the same terms, and enter into heaven by the same strait and narrow way.

It is a peculiar excellence of the Gospel system, and proves its adaptedness as a system of salvation, that

all its great leading and essential doctrines are plain and level with the understanding of the feeblest intellect, addressing themselves to the same powers and principles of the human mind. Had it been a cunningly-devised fable, it surely had lacked this feature. Compare with it the systems of heathen philosophers, and especially those most highly prized when the New Testament was written. None but the learned schoolmen pretended to understand the principles on which they were founded or the doctrines they inculcated. All others, *the great mass*, must take them on trust. How immeasurably different the Divine system of the Gospel! Its essential doctrines and truths all lie on the very face of the Scriptures, so plain that, as the Prophet Habakkuk expresses it, "He may run that readeth," and as Isaiah has it, "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

But while thus adapted to such, it commends itself to those of minds the most cultivated and enlarged. Men with whom it were ridiculous vanity for most infidels, in any age of the world, to pretend comparison; men who have esteemed it their highest honor, as it was their truest glory, to be the humble and devoted disciples of Christ. It is the highest ornament, as it constitutes the only real moral excellence of all grades and ranks of intelligent beings, binding them together in one holy and happy community, of which the infinitely perfect God himself is their Founder and their Father.

Again. The Gospel of Jesus Christ furnishes the only ground of solid peace, the only source of real happiness in this life. It alone can calm and satisfy the enlightened and tender conscience. This faculty will operate in the breast of every man in whom it is not seared as with a hot iron. It is not at the bidding of man to accuse or excuse. It acts independently in the soul of man. It is God's Vicegerent, sitting in judgment on his conduct, and the grand principles of its judgment, the rules of its decisions, are the holy laws of God revealed or inscribed on his very nature. It will, despite of man's inclinations, take cognizance of the moral actions of its subject. It convicts every man of sin, and in most, at least, awakens a dread of righteous retribution; and, I need not say, often throws the sinner into the deepest agony. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?" Now, whither shall such a man go to obtain relief? In all the anguish of his soul, he raises the cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" Would you tell him consult the oracles of heathen philosophy? or the systems of more modern infidelity? He will turn from both with abhorrence. Will you bid him take the light of nature for his guide? Follow the dictates of his reason? And what do they teach him? Just enough of God to increase his alarm, to deepen his despair. If they have taught him one truth more clearly than any other, it is, that God is an infinitely holy being; a sin-hating God, and sits upon a throne

of unbending justice. And if He take His own law for his guide, that law is the very instrument of his death. It is by its application to his heart and life that he is cut off from all hope. They are the curses incurred by its violations which crush him in the dust. By the law is the knowledge of sin; and hence, by the law can no man living be justified. But adoring thanks to God, there is deliverance from this state. His wisdom has devised a remedy, His grace made ample provision. The Gospel of Jesus Christ announces to us this remedy and provision, and tells us how we may avail ourselves of them. There we find an ample satisfaction to the claims of Divine justice, in the infinite atonement of the Son of God; a full satisfaction of its penal demands against him who believes in that Son, and trusts alone in Him for salvation. Let him raise the eye of faith to the Redeemer, and with a confiding, affectionate, devoted, obedient heart, embrace Him as all his salvation, and all his desire; his alarms will instantly give place to calmness, his fears to hope, a hope full of peace and joy. The troubled conscience can find peace nowhere else,—there is salvation in no other: “For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” He can now look on God, not as before, his enemy; but as his Friend, his Father; and on the Son of God, not as the avenger of His Father’s insulted authority; but as his Redeemer from deserved destruction. Yea, his brother, and tenderest sympathizer in all his sorrows and trials.

Once more, the Gospel of the Grace of God, furnishes the only means by which the soul can be happy in eternity. Our highest wisdom, then, consists in preparing for that state. Our earthly existence is of short continuance. Our future, eternal; and under widely different circumstances from the present. We shall be conversant with very different objects; hold intercourse with entirely different beings, and by entirely different means and modes.

Our dispositions and tastes must be conformed to the nature of those objects and beings to be happy in their presence and society. We are going to a world where these are immaterial and spiritual. And of the manner of perception and intercourse, we only know that it is totally different from that of this world. We need, therefore, a special preparation to be happy there. God is the glorious being in the knowledge and immediate presence of whom, every intelligent being in the universe *must be* either happy or miserable. Conformity to him is bliss—non-conformity, misery. How supremely happy, or unutterably wretched, then, must we be when death shall introduce us into his immediate presence. The scheme which the sacred volume reveals, teaches us how we may secure the one and avoid the other. What gratitude should swell our hearts that we have been blessed with a knowledge of it. And with what contempt turn away from every other scheme as a substitute for it. It commends itself, therefore, to every man as worthy of *all* accep-

tation, and the *acceptation* of all. It is the only remedy for the miseries of the fall; and thanks, adoring, and eternal thanks to God, it is a *sovereign one*: in all its features—all its provisions. *Sovereign* in its origin,—it was the effect of God's self-prompting love; *sovereign* in all the means of carrying it into accomplishment,—for “he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;” *sovereign* in the efficiency with which he clothes those means,—“for the preaching of the Cross” (a word which stands for the whole Gospel), “is the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation.”

The Gospel of Christ is yet to sweep away every false religion from the face of the earth—to crush all opposition—to demolish thrones and revolutionize governments, if need be, to plant the standard of the Cross in every nation, on every shore, in every clime. Under its all-subduing and sanctifying power, that epoch is to open on the world, to which Isaiah's prophetic eye was directed when he wrote, “Behold, saith the Lord God, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers. They shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.”

But while no man can release himself from *these*

obligations, let us remember that the salvation here proffered is especially matter of the deepest *personal* concern to every one. It furnishes the only ground of hope to any of us or of our guilty race. Here, no one can assume the responsibility of another. No man can repent, nor believe, nor obey for another. To his own Master every one must stand or fall. Hear the words of the Saviour himself: "*He* that believeth shall be saved. *He* that believeth not shall be damned."

II.

THE ATONEMENT—ITS FULNESS AND SUFFICIENCY.

“For thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.”
—PSALM 25 : 11.

It is not certain what place among the Psalms of David, that properly holds, which contains the text; as they evidently were not arranged in chronological order. It would seem from the text itself, to have been written after his sad fall, to which he refers directly in the fifty-first Psalm, usually and appropriately styled his penitential Psalm. This, however, affects not the doctrine which the text inculcates, though it is well calculated to give it additional force. Many a sinner under conviction, who was not guilty of offences of equal enormity as those which stained the character of David, has offered the same prayer, and made the same confession—adopting his very language: “O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” Ah, who is the sinner among us, where is the individual *living*, whose lips this language would not fitly become? Let the strictest moralist but see himself as God sees him, let him have those views of his heart only which

Omniscience has, and no language were more appropriate: and many a moralist, when properly awakened, with all sincerity and truth, has used it. Still there are different degrees of wickedness. All are not equally guilty. And we may admit, as teaching a doctrine which is everywhere taught in the Scriptures, and none of deeper interest is taught in them, that David was, indeed, guilty of crimes of the *blackest enormity*.

We have, then, in the text, *three* most important and deeply interesting facts for our present consideration.

I. That the *enormity* of one's sins is, in itself, no bar to salvation.

II. That this enormity may be acceptably pleaded as an *argument* for their forgiveness: and

III. The *ground* of forgiveness in any case:

“For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.”

I. The enormity of one's sin, is in itself, no bar to salvation.

To establish this blessed fact requires no long argument.

1. No greater expiation—no richer ransom—no atonement more efficacious—no substitute more glorious, could be furnished, or possibly conceived, than has been provided. God could provide nothing greater. All his perfections, and especially those of his infinite wisdom and power, have been brought into exercise to accomplish what his infinite benevolence proposed.

Hence the work of salvation is styled “the *power* of God, and the *wisdom* of God,” yea, “the mighty power of God.” Hence it were a reflection on his character to suppose that *any sin* of any *creature* can be, *in itself*, too great to be forgiven. There are sins which God never *will* forgive: nor will they ever be repented of. And though they possess peculiar aggravations, yet it is not on *that ground* that they are unpardonable. This we must refer to his mere sovereignty. Nor will the least sin be forgiven without repentance. The only reason which the Scripture *assigns* why fallen angels cannot be forgiven, or why they are not saved is, that “Christ took not on him the *nature* of *angels*.” And the grand reason why men are saved is, that “he took on him the seed of Abraham.” In other words, human nature; and in that nature made an atonement for sin, as unlimited in its nature and efficacy, as the nature of the God-man Mediator, is unlimited, i. e., infinite. On this ground, no sin, in itself, can be a bar to salvation. The provision which has been made exceeds all *possible* enormity of sin. Hence 2. This is the express and repeated statement of God’s inspired word. Hear that word: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Where sin abounded” (or reached the highest degree of turpitude), “grace did much *more* abound.” The Apostle here, uses a *double superlative*, as it were, to express the *excess* of grace over the highest degree of sin. The phraseology is singular and peculiar, and deserves the

deepest consideration. "Where sin *abounded*, grace did *much more abound*." It is not possible to frame language more full or decisive on the point now before us. But to this we may add, 3. The invitations and calls which issue from the word of God. These are not restricted to any particular class of men, or any particular description of character; to the young and naturally amiable—to the moral, they are unrestricted—universal. The offer of life is made to all men: "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice (the voice of God's mercy), is unto the sons of men." Equally unrestricted is the following language: "The Spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Language cannot be more universal. But this is not all; the very vilest are singled out, over whom God even pours out the tenderest and most earnest expostulations and entreaties. Towards Israel, at a time of their greatest idolatry and abandonment to the most provoking sins, Jehovah uses this language: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? My heart is turned within thee. My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man." And this I remark, 4. Brings to our purpose another important fact, viz., that the vilest have actually been redeemed. This was true of multitudes over whom God poured forth

those pathetic expostulations, just recited. He did not return in his anger to destroy them, but to melt them to repentance, and to save them. This was in repeated instances true of that people, and for successive generations.

What more abandoned wretches ever lived than those were, or had been, of whom the Church at Ephesus was composed? They are characterized by every mark of infamy. But “they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The same was true of almost all the first Christian converts. The first Church ever planted on the platform of the Christian Dispensation, was extensively composed of the very crucifiers of the Lord of life and glory—the Church at Jerusalem. This awful crime, added to lives of the most debasing wickedness, surely would have excluded them from the *possibility* of salvation, if anything could. From tribes, and communities, and classes, we might descend to individuals; from Manasseh to Saul of Tarsus, and from Saul of Tarsus to our own day, during which long period, and in every age of it, there have been multitudes of the most polluted and abandoned, plucked as brands from the burning, and who have abundantly evinced the genuineness of their conversion, by lives most exemplary and devoted to the cause of Christ, and left the world in triumph.

One thing more. Precisely the same terms of salva-

tion are laid down for all, and the same promise of eternal life made to every one who complies with them. Repentance is no more insisted on, no more necessary to the *greatest* than to the *least* sinner; a sinner of a hundred years, than the youth of a tenth part of them. The necessity of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the same to all: "Except ye repent, ye shall *all* likewise perish;" and "He that believeth not shall be damned." When sin is repented of, and Christ is believed in, the same absolute promise is made; the same blessings are secured. His "sins shall be blotted out, he shall be saved." The multitude and magnitude of one's sins form no exception. Without the exercise of repentance and faith, there is salvation in no case; with them, in no case condemnation.

But enough on our first point. We rest the truth of it on what has been so briefly presented—that no enormity or amount of sin, *in itself*, is a bar to salvation; and proceed to show—

II. That the *greatness* of *one's sins* may be acceptably pleaded as an *argument* for their forgiveness.

This is the plain and unqualified declaration in the text, "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great.*" This language was not prompted merely by the natural conscience, quickened to the highest activity; nor was it the expression of utter despair—a mere exclamation that all was lost—that there was no hope in his case—such as a Judas might utter. It was prompted by, and penned under, the direct influence

of the Divine Spirit, and left on the inspired record for the instruction and benefit of other great offenders. In the case of David, we know it was a *successful* argument, and directly followed with pardon. Among the reasons for the success of such an argument, we may remark :

1. That when a great sinner is brought into a state of conviction by the Spirit of God, *all the energies* of the soul are roused to their highest exercise. His exercises may not be more sincere than those of a less offender. But almost, if not quite, every sinner under conviction tries every possible expedient to obtain relief, and gather some hope, before he will cast himself wholly and unreservedly on the sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Multitudes, indeed, succeed in obtaining relief, but, alas! at the expense of their souls' endless destruction. How many fall back on their morality, with the consoling plea that they are no worse, or that they are even better than others who call themselves Christians, and either embrace a false hope and practise the ordinary round of external duties, or soon sink into deeper indifference! But when a great sinner is thrown into conviction, he has no such resources of which to avail himself. He is cut off from the plea of former morality; he can institute no favorable comparison between himself and others. He is compelled to look *only* at himself, and as he really is, and as he knows God's eye is upon him. He must cry, and with the deepest bitterness and anguish

of soul, for mercy, or sink at once to utter despair. No language is as appropriate, as natural, as "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is *great*." Such a state, though one of mere conviction, is a peculiarly hopeful one. Such a man may fall into a state of despair; but he is not likely to relapse into a state of indifference, or return to his former course of iniquity. Our Saviour has given his judgment in such a case. The Publican was one of that description, who could only "smite upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner;" and he was pardoned and "justified." No man, indeed, can have too deep a sense of his guiltiness before God. The language of the text befits the lips of every one. But it is peculiarly fit for sinners of enormous wickedness, and was intended to assure such that the greatness of their iniquity, instead of sinking them into utter despair, may even be pleaded as a prevailing argument before the infinitely holy God. But

2. *God is peculiarly glorified in the forgiveness of such.* God is glorified by the *manifestation* of his *character*, the display of his glorious *attributes*. There is an *inherent* and a *declarative* glory of God. It is of the latter we speak. It is this only which creatures can experience or witness. And how is God thus glorified, his perfections brought to view, when he pardons a bloody Manasseh, a fallen David, a denying Peter, or a persecuting Saul of Tarsus? He is glorified in the exercise of his power. O, how is his omni-

potence displayed when he arrests the proud, self-fortified infidel, and makes him feel there is an infinitely wise God, who laughs at his infidelity; whose ignorance, as Paul expresses it, is wiser than men; that there is a Saviour, who is almighty to save or to destroy; an omnipotent Spirit, who has torn his refuges of lies from him, and brought him to sit as a little child at the feet of Jesus, now nourishing his long-famished soul with the precious doctrines of his cross, which he had spurned! But this is only an example of a single class. There are multitudes of others as far from heaven and near to perdition as he, who are converted and put among God's people. Was the creation of the material universe a proof of God's power, where there was nothing to *resist*? How much more so in the new creation of depraved man, where the strongest opposition is made, but is overcome! But the display of power is not all; yea, is less astonishing than the manifestation of the *mercy* of God. Mercy is favor shown to the ill-deserving. Power and grace are combined in the mighty revolution and renovation which regeneration effects. Two acts of omnipotence are performed. The old nature is subdued and a new nature produced. "Old things are done away; behold, all things are become new;" while the subject of this twofold operation experiences an entire change of relations to God, from being an object of God's just abhorrence to his having become an object of his affection. It was in view of such displays

of power and grace St. Paul exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And this accords with universal observation. How much more deeply impressed are men with the manifestation of God's power and mercy, when they see one of the vilest of their fellow-beings made a subject of sovereign grace, than when the amiable and moral sinner becomes a convert! It is not, indeed, that God's essential glory is promoted by the one more than by the other—and not at all by either. For that can neither be increased nor diminished. It is infinite, like his own nature. But there is a more glorious *display* of all the *known* attributes of Jehovah in the one case than in the other, in the view of all beholders, in heaven itself as well as on earth. There is a greater triumph of grace over justice. Not at the destruction of either, but the reconciliation of both. It is this which exalts the work of redemption above that of creation, and places it at the very head of all the works of God. Was there not peculiar joy in heaven, as well as with the persecuted, bleeding Church on earth, think you, when the furious Saul of Tarsus was prostrated to the ground by a voice from heaven, and became a subdued and meek disciple of Christ? Surely there was a *new* and higher note of praise to redeeming grace struck among all the inhabitants of that world! This leads me to remark—

3. Another reason why the greatness of one's sins

may be used as an argument with God is, that when those who are guilty of them are converted, they more actively glorify God than others. This, indeed, is not the *reason why* they are converted; *that*, in all cases, must be referred to God's sovereign pleasure. But it is the *effect*. For this, too, we have the authority of our Saviour: "*To whom much is forgiven, he will love much.*" We see this exemplified in the case of David, and Peter, and Paul. It has often been seen and remarked of multitudes of others, who have been thus snatched as brands. They seldom lose the deep impressions of which they were the subjects in the season of their convictions, and hence furnish the brightest examples of humble and ardent piety and most devoted labors in the service of Christ. Search the Bible through, and you will find them of that description. And the annals of the Church, since the days of the Apostles, furnish no names as bright as those of the same class.

But there is *one more*, and the principal reason; one which infinitely exalts the mercy and grace of God. This is the gracious assurance that no man perishes from any *fatal necessity* in his case. While this is a clear inference from the nature and extent of the provision which God has actually made, he has added to all this the express assurance, and in so many words, that the very *enormity* of one's iniquity may be urged as an *argument* for its pardon: "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Of this ground of encourage-

ment for the vilest, multitudes have availed themselves, and are now in heaven, celebrating the riches of grace, who otherwise had sunk down in despair and perished forever. How many are there—perhaps, I am addressing some—who though they had not sinned as Manasseh, or Saul of Tarsus, yet, from their overwhelming convictions, had conceived it scarcely possible that they could be saved, have, from the example of such, taken courage, and made their way to the Saviour, and received forgiveness. Paul himself clearly intimates, that this was one reason why God had mercy on *him*, who regarded himself as the greatest, the “*chief of sinners.*” “Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first (chiefly), or pre-eminently, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern, an example to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” Yet none of these things are the true grounds of forgiveness in any case.

III. To show what that ground is, is the last topic of this discourse. And this I have time merely to state. Nor is more necessary, since the text itself has expressed it in terms which cannot be misunderstood: “For thy *name's sake*, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity.” While the *greatness* of the iniquity, and a deep consciousness of it, was the most powerful of all reasons why David should apply for pardon, he was well aware that pardon could not be *granted* for those reasons. But at once referred that act to God himself.

No conditions which God might prescribe—neither the sinner's repentance nor his faith—could divest God of his sovereign right and sole prerogative, to exercise his pardoning mercy. And until the sinner himself feels this, he has not reached that point of surrender and submission to God which insures his acceptance, and secures eternal life. A word or two, and I will close. How worthy of all acceptation, and the acceptation of all, then, is the salvation which God in Christ has provided for dying sinners. A salvation as adequate, and as freely offered to the *vilest* as to the *least* offender: the salvation of the one as consistent with all the perfections of God as of the other. And what is even *more*, those perfections even *more gloriously displayed* in the salvation of the former than of the latter.

While eternal life is thus freely offered, and under circumstances of encouragement to the *vilest*—who amongst us will *dare* to reject its offer? There is not only infinite *folly* in refusing it, but infinite *rashness* and *temerity* in not, with all the heart, embracing it. O, what an aggravation will it be, even in hell itself, to the mere moralist, to the naturally amiable youth, only who rest their hopes on their morality and amiability, and finally perish, as perish they must, if they be lost, to see in the last day, as see they then will, multitudes from the classes of the vilest of our race, on the right hand of the Judge, while they will be found on the left. So said that Judge himself of just such characters, while he tabernacled in flesh: "Verily,

I say unto you, that the *publicans* and *harlots* go into the kingdom of God before you," or, rather than you. Who can conceive the anguish of soul with which such will go away to perdition, while they will see multitudes of those who like the once polluted, but washed and sanctified Ephesians, ascend with the Redeemer to the world of glory, and hear their song, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Ah, that very sight, that very song, will of itself make a dreadful hell! And can any of *you* consent—will any of you *dare* to be of that wretched number? If not, repent to-day! Repent *now*! For, remember, that though the vilest will be saved on repentance—the least offender—even the offender in *one point only*, if that were possible, will perish without it. But think not that *outward acts* of *enormity* alone constitute the greatest *vileness* in the sight of God. There can, at least, be no greater provocation of God's wrath, than to remain unmoved and unsubdued, year after year, and under the sound of the Gospel. No *greater sin* than *coolly* to reject Christ and his salvation. This it is to array oneself among his crucifiers. God only knows how many among us are now of that unhappy number. But a few days, at longest, will decide.

III.

THE SINNER'S PART IN THE WORK OF SAVING THE SOUL.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—PHILIPPIANS, 2 : 12, 13.

THIS passage has a most important *practical*, as well as a no less important *doctrinal* meaning and bearing. Indeed, the doctrinal and practical are most intimately and essentially connected. Right views—especially of the great, fundamental truths of the Gospel, the character of God, the condition of men, the relations between them, and of the plan of salvation, the means and mode of obtaining and securing it—are indispensable to all right affections; and *both* right views and right affections are equally indispensable to acceptable obedience, or a proper course of conduct. The former, indeed, may exist without the latter; but the latter cannot exist without the former—that is, there may be right views without right affections or true obedience. But there can be neither right affections nor true obedience without right views, or correct doctrinal belief.

In the text, the Apostle has not only presented these

things in the closest connection, but he has assigned the doctrine of man's absolute dependence on God as the only ground of encouragement or hope—the all-efficient cause which secures the accomplishment of the great work which is commanded, viz., the salvation of the soul. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: *for* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Here the ground of encouragement—the cause which secures the performance of this work, and consequently the strongest reason or motive to undertake it is, that God worketh in us both to will and to do,—*enables* us to perform it. And it is not sufficiently considered that, feeling this dependence on God, this is a work in which it is his “*good pleasure,*” his *delight,* to *put forth* his own almighty agency to secure this happy result. Such is unquestionably the meaning and bearing of these important words in the text. They do not express his *sovereignty* merely, although it is an act, indeed, of *sovereign* grace, which he may exert or withhold as he pleases; but it is his *pleasure* to exert it. And Paul assigns this as the *reason* why one should *exert himself* to work out his own salvation. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: *for* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” It is not God who *wills* for the sinner, or *does* for the sinner; but he inclines and influences the sinner *himself* to *will* and to *do*. That an *objection* should ever be started to this position, this

infinitely kind and condescending interposition of God, —the putting forth of his own agency over the perverse will of man, bringing all his energies to this mighty work,—is, indeed, the strangest of all the suggestions of a depraved heart, and may well complete the proof of its *entire* depravity. It is, at best, a mere apology for doing nothing for one's self. And certainly, he who *disbelieves* his entire and absolute dependence on God, and the necessity of *his agency* to influence him to will and to do, “in order to the working out of his own salvation,” ought to put forth *all his powers* to accomplish that work himself; for, confessedly, it is the most important work in which an immortal soul can be employed. What is important, if not the salvation of the soul—if not to avoid endless misery and secure endless happiness, the one or the other of which is certain?

The following are the *general* topics of this discourse :

I. The *duty* of working out our own salvation.
 “Work out your own salvation.”

1. This duty arises from God's most *express commands*, and is as binding as God's authority can make it. It is addressed to us in our individual capacity : “Work out *your own* salvation.” The same command is given in various forms of expression : “Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit. Turn yourselves and live. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgres-

sions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Strive to enter in at the strait gate." These are mere specimens. No command can be expressed in plainer language; and I need not say that a command issuing from proper authority (and this comes from God himself) implies a *duty*, and a duty as binding as the authority is great.

2. It is a duty, because it involves a man's *highest interest*. There are no interests which it is not one's duty to *sacrifice* when they come in competition, or at all interfere with that of the soul's salvation—worldly possessions, comforts, friends, and life itself. There is nothing in which men have, and *feel* that they have, a deeper interest than in these things. And all these are to be cheerfully given up if they stand in the way of their salvation. So has the Saviour most expressly decided.

In the case of the rich young nobleman, Christ made the *cheerful abandonment* of all his worldly possessions the very condition of securing treasure in heaven, and of being his disciple. "Go, and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple;" that is, of course, when this is required, there must be the *disposition* to do it. The Saviour sums up all in the following strong and remarkable terms: "If any man come to

me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." That is, loves any of these things more than he loves Christ; or is not willing to part with all these for heaven. No man, surely, has a right to throw away or needlessly expose his life. There is nothing which he will not readily part with to save it, of a worldly nature. And yet he ought cheerfully to part with it to save his soul. For it is infinitely more valuable. Its salvation is one's highest conceivable interest. Hence, 3. The work of salvation is *one's own*. "Work out *your own* salvation." Others, in various ways, may aid us in this work, but others cannot accomplish it *for us*. They may entreat and beseech us—they may pray for us—may feel and express the deepest anxiety and concern for us. But all their entreaties, and prayers, and tears, and efforts, will be in vain, unless *we*, with all our hearts and energies, engage in it ourselves. They cannot repent for us—nor believe for us—nor obey for us—any more than be saved for us. They cannot change our hearts. Many, no doubt are depending on others; millions, indeed, on what they suppose, because taught to believe it, to be the *surplus merit* of others, beyond what is necessary to secure their own salvation. Vain, and infinitely worse than vain reliance. But there are others besides the dupes of Romanism, who, at least, are, to no small extent, depending on others for salvation. Many a child is thus de-

pending on the piety of his parents. Vain dependence that. It is *wholly* a *personal* concern; and, therefore, every one's first and highest duty.

4. Without one's own highest efforts the soul will be lost. There is nothing so easy as to lose one's soul. One has only to follow his *strongest inclinations*—the impulse of his wholly depraved nature—the *strongest current* of his feelings, and the horrid work of his eternal ruin is accomplished. He has but to remain *indifferent* to the subject, not to say *violently opposed* to it, and the soul is lost. Even more than this—without the *strongest efforts* to save the soul, and it is eternally lost! Such is everywhere the plain representation of the holy Book. Hear Christ himself: “*Wide* is the gate, and *broad* is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. But strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” “*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able.” “The kingdom of heaven suffereth *violence*, and the violent take it by force;” that is, the strongest effort is required to enter the kingdom of heaven. And the careless, indifferent, thoughtless sinner, is as certain to lose his soul as the infidel, and most violent opposer. Ah, the facilities to eternal death are many and great. No effort is required to render perdition certain. The labor—the effort—the struggle is to prevent it. There is found the conflict—the ten thousand difficulties—

the warfare. The whole course of the sinner is to be reversed. He must hate what he supremely loved; and love what, with all his heart, he hated. He must hate his sins, and love God and holiness. And hate sin because he loves God. This will require him to cut off a *right hand*, and pluck out a *right eye*. He must lay aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets him; break up the most confirmed habits, and form their opposites; abandon the society of wicked associates; avoid, as far as possible, places and scenes of temptation, and carnal gratification. This has been the course of all who are entitled to the character of followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such, too, has been the *commencement* of that course, or Divine assistance cannot be expected—will not be granted.

What then is a duty—if not to work out one's own salvation? What duty may *not* be safely *neglected*, if that of saving one's soul may be neglected? The word, *duty*, has no meaning, if men are not most solemnly bound to put forth their utmost efforts to avoid eternal death, and secure eternal life.

II. Another general topic of remark is, that the accomplishment of this great and all-important work is placed within the reach of us all. This necessarily follows from the fact just established, that it is the solemn duty of us all to work out our own salvation. Nor is the truth of this statement abated, nor its force at all weakened, by the fact of its greatness or its difficulties. It is, indeed, the mightiest enterprise ever pro-

posed to man. It is beset with difficulties and obstacles to which no other is subjected. And yet the feeblest have successfully accomplished it. Indeed, such compose the vast majority of those who have obtained the prize, and secured eternal life. The child has done it, while the man of giant powers has failed—the most illiterate has succeeded, while the philosopher has come short and perished. And this is just the representation of the Bible. Hear the Apostle Paul: “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.” The reason of this, the Apostle had just previously assigned. “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a *stumbling-block*, and unto the Greeks *foolishness*: but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” In the text, too, he has given the reason why any succeed in working out their own salvation. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his

good pleasure." This is the only ground of encouragement for any of our fallen race—the only foundation of hope that any soul is to be saved. And, surely, it is ground sufficient.

When we reflect on our depravity—the enmity of the natural heart to God and to holiness—our utter aversion to the very plan and only method of our salvation, and consequently our helplessness; what higher, what other encouragement could we have or wish, than the blessed assurance that God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure? Why object to that only and all-sufficient aid? Who will overcome the sinner's indisposition—who change his will, if not God? The sinner himself will not do it. This were an absurdity. If left to himself he must inevitably perish. For there is no truth better supported by universal observation and experience, than that which the Saviour uttered when he said, "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life." The work, then, is a feasible one. If God undertake it, it must be accomplished. There are difficulties which men cannot overcome. But it should be borne in mind, that this necessary influence of his, is not the *work itself*. It is essential to its accomplishment; but it is not the performance itself. It is not God acting in the sinner's stead. It is not his *willing* for us. It is the *man's own will* and his *own act*. But God influences him both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. This is the practical import of our text, and the great leading

thought in it. The command is directly addressed to the absolutely dependent creature: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and as sinners would not do that—as they would not change their own hearts—as they are utterly opposed to the whole work, the Apostle immediately adds, for their encouragement and only hope: "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He can do it; and do it consistently with the *freest exercise* of all their powers. They shall *choose* to do it. They shall *will* it. The work is theirs: but "God worketh in them both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." And they will and act as freely as though all were *self-originated*, and no foreign influence exerted.

III. A most important practical topic here presents itself. We propound it in the form of a question: for in that form it often presents itself to the mind of a serious inquirer, who desires to know what he must do to be saved. This question is, How shall one work out his own salvation? How shall he begin this mighty work? The text answers this question. It refers to the very starting-point. It gives the *only* satisfactory answer.

But before I make this application of the text to the particular point, there are a few things to be premised.

It is implied that the inquiry here made is honestly made: is put in good faith: is seriously propounded.

It implies, moreover, a disposition and a purpose to

pursue the proper course when discovered. The salvation of the soul is regarded as a most important matter. There is the conviction, though it may not be as deep as it should be, that the soul is exposed to danger—is liable to be lost; that its salvation must be secured in time, or never secured: and that its eternal destiny may any moment be unchangeably fixed. Every rational, reflecting being must necessarily come to these conclusions, though they may be very coolly drawn. This requires no special Divine influence. The exercise of those powers of mind with which the Creator has endowed men, if directed to this subject, and which they can be as well as to any other, is sufficient for this. They can go even beyond this. They can so far impress these admitted truths, these rational convictions on their minds, as to awaken some feeling—some sense of danger. They can do this in regard to their immortal souls, as well as to their dying bodies—their eternal, as to their temporal concerns. It were, indeed, but reasonable to feel far more deeply in regard to the former than to the latter. Serious reflection may produce even concern and anxiety. This process is not only natural but easy. But this falls short, promising as it may be, of what is requisite to authorize any strong expectation of final success. There are few of any candor or reflection under the light of the Gospel, who are not often the subjects of such impressions, but who give no evidence of evangelical repentance, and who do not themselves believe

that they are Christians. But many are not satisfied with such a condition; and though the subjects of increased conviction, and not unfrequently to a painful degree, still desire to feel more deeply. They are not satisfied with slight convictions. And it is often desirable and necessary that they should be deepened. It is not that there is anything *holy* in the pains of a wounded spirit. It is not that God takes any pleasure in them; or that they awaken his compassion or pity to higher degrees. But because, without a painful conviction of the odious nature, and immense evil of sin, we shall not hate and renounce it: and without a deep and painful conviction of our lost and perishing condition, we shall not apply to Christ, and cast ourselves wholly upon him for pardon and salvation. And short of this there is no salvation for us. This is the necessary and all-important point to be gained. That reached, and there is the *evidence* that the good work is begun: the proof that one has begun to "work out his own salvation," and the proof, too, that it is under the influence of "God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The turning-point, therefore, is an unreserved surrender to God, from a thorough conviction of utter helplessness and hopelessness, short of such a surrender. But to reach that spot—that turning-point is the difficulty. For, no sooner is that reached, than one of two things must necessarily follow: either despair, or a cheerful yielding up of all to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the question returns, and is the very question which almost every serious inquirer puts, How is that spot to be reached, where, from a conviction of utter hopelessness and helplessness, the sinner surrenders to Christ, and with all cheerfulness and eagerness reposes itself in the arms of sovereign mercy? There is but one way, and that is by the *application of God's holy law to the heart and life*. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." This was Paul's course. He found it a way of death and terror; for by it he was slain. He found himself cut off from all hope. It filled him with alarm. He saw and felt that by that law he was condemned. He was filled with fear, and he trembled. The course is the same now, and is prescribed by his inspired pen in the text, "Work out your own salvation with *fear and trembling*."

Let, then, the awakened or thoughtful sinner, or any individual who honestly desires to know his true condition and his prospects for eternity, and to know what he must do to be saved, carefully examine the law of God. Let him take his stand at the foot of the Mount whence, from its blazing tops, it issued from the mouth of the Almighty and Holy Lawgiver. Let him attentively read the awful comments of that Lawgiver scattered throughout his inspired Statute Book, to learn its reasonableness, its holiness, its goodness, its perfect adaptedness to secure man's best good and highest happiness; its spirituality, laying its claims and asserting its demands on the very springs of all

moral actions; not limited, as all human laws necessarily must be, to outward acts, to overt violations, but reaching to every thought, desire, and feeling; demanding absolute perfection,—and then honestly and impartially compare his heart and life with that standard. This done, let him turn to its awful sanction, its terrible penalties, the eternal punishment denounced for each and every violation, in thought and feeling, and word and deed,—and he that does not *fear and tremble*, deserves not the character of a *serious* and *reflecting* person.

O! who can stand the test, or bear the scrutiny? What heart but must quake? Who indulge the slightest hope at the bar of justice—the justice of the infinitely holy God? And who, in such a condition, could consent to remain a moment in it, when he hears the glad news, the heart-cheering tidings, that provision has been made to relieve the justly-condemned sinner from the penalties of God's violated laws, and raise the soul to purity and peace, and, ultimately, to endless happiness? When, feeling himself cut off from every other resource, from every other help and hope, he casts himself on that provision, submits to God, trusts alone in Jesus Christ,—*then*, and not *till* then, has he begun to work out his own salvation. All other work is but adding to the desperateness of his condition; is increasing the weight of his condemnation; is as sinful as it will prove in vain. It is distrusting the Saviour; it is rejecting his proffered mercy; it is refusing to accept his assistance; it is questioning the sincerity of

his invitations, the truth of his declarations, the efficacy of his blood, the merit of his death. And how are these views of the perfect holiness of God's law, its inviolable justice, and the sinner's desert, set forth by the Saviour, when he offered himself a sacrifice to its demands, in the sinner's stead, on the cross! How must his death deepen our impressions of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the righteousness of the sinner's doom to eternal misery! Nor, indeed, less conspicuous the compassion, the mercy and love of God and the Lord Jesus Christ; the willingness—yea, *desire*, that sinners would avail themselves of it, and be saved.

And I trust there are some here who are disposed to avail themselves of it; who, feeling their sinfulness and just condemnation, and their utter helplessness, are willing to take *God's method* to secure the salvation of their souls; to commit them to the Saviour. If their convictions are deep enough to show them and make them feel the peril of their condition, and that all their help and hope are in Christ, let them delay no longer to place themselves in his hands—to yield all to him. If their impressions are not deep enough, he will deepen them. Their painful doubts he will banish; their fears will give place to confidence; their trembling to calmness and peace. “God will work in them both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure.” All their impressions before that step is taken, and which they desire to have deepened, will only deepen their *despair*, and be all *unavailing agony*.

The end of mere conviction is to show the sinner

his real state and condition, his helplessness and hopelessness, and constrain him to throw himself on Divine mercy, and yield all into the hands of the Saviour. But this the sinner will not see and feel until the law of God is applied in all its extent, and spirituality, and terrible denunciations. He must hear its *curse*s, and feel that he is justly exposed to experience them, or he will never listen to the sweet accents of mercy; he must be cut off from all hope in himself, or he will not rest it alone on Christ. This is the office of the law and the end of conviction.

And now, although I have had special reference to a particular class of my hearers in most of the foregoing remarks, they are appropriately addressed to all. All have an equal concern in the great object proposed. All must be brought to this state, or there is no salvation for them. As rational and accountable beings, and free moral agents, you are all most reasonably commanded to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

The possession of these endowments makes you the proper subjects of this command; and it surely is no abatement of its appropriateness or its force, that "having eyes you see not, and having ears you hear not," but an aggravation of your guilt. With all the authority, therefore, and in the name of Him who holds the eternal destiny of the soul in his hands, I reiterate the command in the text, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

IV.

THE IMPENITENT SINNER'S CASE HOPELESS—HIS PROSPECTS CONSIDERED.

“Having no hope.”—EPHESIANS 2 : 12.

THE Apostle is here addressing the Ephesian Christians with reference to their former, unconverted state. True, that state was one of gross heathenism. But the truth of the declaration admits no abatement from that circumstance; nor from any *external* circumstances in which sinners may be placed. Indeed, their total ignorance of Christ and his Gospel was rather a *palliation* than an *aggravation* of their guilt and peril. At least, the weight of condemnation is increased in proportion to the light possessed but resisted; the means of salvation enjoyed yet abused. This is abundantly established by the express word of God, and accords with the decision of reason—results, indeed, from the whole moral nature of man.

But these points are not involved in the declaration of the text. It is a broad declaration, under which is embraced the impenitent of all classes and conditions. It is true of every impenitent sinner, every individual

who is not a true Christian, that he has no hope—and that, too, in the very sense in which the Apostle meant to be understood when referring the Ephesian Christians to their former unconverted condition.

The following inquiries present the order of remarks to be submitted :

I. What is meant by the Apostle by having no hope ?

II. *Why* are the impenitent without hope ? And

III. What are their prospects while they remain impenitent ?

These are questions of great simplicity. Their answers shall be equally so.

I. What is meant by the Apostle by having no hope ?

He surely did not mean that those Ephesians, when in their unconverted state, had no purpose, no expectation of future happiness ? Their very *idolatry* proved the contrary. All their rites and ceremonies were intended to secure the favor of their idol gods, on whom they supposed, though vainly, their eternal well-being depended. This was their object, and it inspired them with hope. Nor is it otherwise with any other sinner, however vile, who believes or fears, or has any *apprehension* of a future state of existence, and especially one of reward and punishment, an instinct interwoven in man's very nature.

In the broad, unqualified meaning of the term, every

man hopes to be happy in eternity. The absence of all hope, in this sense, and on this subject, were utter despair—despair which could not be *concealed* nor *disguised*. It would be depicted on the very countenance of every sinner. The Apostle, then, did not mean this: universal experience would contradict him. The Scriptures speak of different kinds of hope. There is the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish—a hope that is as the spider's web; and there is the hope which maketh not ashamed, which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil—which takes hold of heaven itself with a firm and unyielding grasp. Such a hope is sustained by appropriate, relevant, and solid evidence. Its basis is God's truth, seen and felt, in its sanctifying power. In a word, it rests on the experience of regenerating grace. All other hope is mere presumption. Christ has expressly said, "Except a man be born again, born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" *i. e.*, in peace—cannot be saved. Holiness is the effect and fruit of regeneration. Now, where this fruit is not produced and seen, there is no true hope of salvation: there is no qualification for heaven. Where, then, is the ground of expectation—of hope? This is what is meant by "having no hope." And I need not say this is utterly inconsistent with *impenitence*, however accompanied with much that is amiable and naturally lovely or praiseworthy among men, or even *externally*

conformed to God's own requirements. There is often much of all this where there is no true holiness, and consequently, no valid hope of eternal life. But

II. *Why* are the impenitent without hope? I answer, because :

1. They are under condemnation. This is the condition, by nature, of all the human race. With a just and holy God, this is necessarily consequent on sin ; and the whole world lieth in sin and wickedness. There is but one way by which this just condemnation can be lifted from the soul, by which the sinner can be recovered from this state ; and that way is faith in Jesus Christ. So has he expressly taught : “ He that believeth on him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God ;” “ He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”

I need not say that a state of condemnation excludes all solid hope, while that condemnation exists. True, indeed, this is not always so under human governments. A pardoning power exists, and is often exercised towards a criminal justly condemned to death ; and *all* hope of such clemency is seldom extinguished till the moment of execution. But this arises from the imperfection of all human institutions. Such an interposition is a suspension of justice—an

essential ingredient in a perfect government such as God's. This is a good reason why an impenitent sinner has no hope. *He* is under law, and the language of the law is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written therein."

2. We might add, as a distinct consideration, although implied in what has already been said, that God has expressly declared that there is no hope for an impenitent sinner, while he remains impenitent. The text is such a declaration: "Having no hope." As already shown, these words are of *universal application* to sinners, while impenitent. And I need only remark farther, under this head, that a valid hope is everywhere spoken of in this Book, as a fruit of God's special grace. The passages are too numerous, and must be too familiar with every reader of the Bible, on this point, to require particular reference.

3. This is the experience of all who become Christians. There is, invariably, an abandonment of every other hope of salvation than that which is founded on Christ alone, evidenced by a cordial belief in him, and reliance on his merits. Every man who seriously believes in a future state of existence, and expects or fears to meet his Maker in judgment, has placed his hope of receiving his approbation on some ground or other: some on their morality—their good works—the correctness of their views—their professions and external observances: others even on their comparative freedom from vices and the grosser sins—and

others still, on the indiscriminate and universal exercise of Divine mercy. But whatever the ground on which they have placed their hopes, the true convert abandons them all. Regenerating grace sweeps them all away. They are often the last things that are yielded. And there is nothing, perhaps, even with the true Christian, to which he so tenaciously clings, as some merit of his own; something in or of himself which affords some plea of recommendation to the Divine favor. This is that legal spirit, as it is called, which, with multitudes, at least, seems to require grace and death combined to extinguish.

Again, there is no hope, because there is no *qualification* for heaven. It were, indeed, no kindness—no favor to the impenitent sinner to admit him to that holy place. The hosannahs of the glorified would fill him with ineffable agony. The full displays of the Divine excellence would only act on his unrestrained enmity. Sin must be hated before holiness can be loved. It is, therefore, no arbitrary determination, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is not an arbitrary requirement or condition, “Ye must be born again: for except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This is an essential prerequisite to the enjoyment of heaven. There is no happiness or even satisfaction on earth, where there is no congeniality of feeling with the circumstances in which one is placed. But in a world where all resources are cut off—where the glories of

God in one full and ceaseless blaze pour forth upon the soul—if the soul is not fitted to receive them, there can be only misery.

III. What are the *prospects* of sinners while impenitent, who have no hope, and shall die so? In answering this inquiry, let us pass beyond the limits of this life—the consolation and support of a Christian hope under the trials and perplexities incident to our present state, and even in the last conflict, when that alone can sustain the spirit just entering the world of spirits. In this world the vilest are seldom cut off from all resources. Utter despair seldom commences here. The world can sometimes *drown* when it cannot *satisfy*. It has power to harden and stupify. There is the quiet of a seared conscience. But let us pass to the period when all these resources will fail—when the absorbing or benumbing influence of the objects of sense and time shall cease. That period at farthest is the moment of death. Though all then is solemn and awful reality, yet so far as revelation has made the disclosure, and announced the doom of the finally impenitent, we may even now, in prospect, contemplate that doom as certain. To that point let us now send our thoughts.

1. They will forever be excluded from heaven. And were this *all*, what a doom! What *is* heaven? We can here know, indeed, but little of it. We know, however, that it is the only world of happiness. Whatever of God's works shall remain, as places of resi-

dence for holy beings, whether of our race or any other, when this earth is melted, and these visible heavens shall have passed away, if remain they will, they are but so many mansions in God's house, prepared for those who love and serve him. All will constitute but one world of happiness. Not a portion of it, however, will a finally impenitent sinner ever enter. He possesses no qualifications for such a place—no taste for its joys. He could join in no song that is there sung. How could he see Him, of whom he here disliked to hear? How adore Him whom here he set at nought? All the sources and occasions of rapture to the Redeemer would but increase his misery. And yet there is no other place of happiness in all the universe of God. No other world, where, as here, any object—any employment can be found to minister to his depraved desires—to take his thoughts off from himself. O, what a loss is the loss of heaven! What a condition for an immortal soul, furnished with every capacity for endless and ever-increasing happiness! I repeat, were exclusion from heaven *all*—what a condition—what a doom for such a being, of such powers and capacities—and once, *once* of such prospects—such opportunities—such means—yea, such facilities for the possession and enjoyment of heaven! Here, too, in this connection, a new train of thought will spring up to induce their misery—their foolish and criminal misimprovement and abuse of the means once possessed, of securing that unspeakable happiness from which

they are forever debarred. The thought, how near the kingdom of God came to them, and they refused to enter in.

2. They will be forever *separated* from all their *pious friends*. Piety is not always a bar to the exercise of the warmest natural affections of sinners toward those who possess it. It is not piety itself, however, which calls forth their love to their pious relatives and friends. *This*, for its own sake, is no recommendation with one who is himself destitute of piety. Alas, how often has it proved the occasion of bitter feelings and violent opposition! Ah, how often has the declaration of our Saviour been verified, "A man's foes are they of his own house!" Yet, these instances are comparatively few. Various causes may contribute to a favorable effect on irreligious friends. It has not unfrequently been their *boast even*, that their relatives were *devoted Christians*. Many a parent has made this boast of his children, and many a husband of his wife. Men who are destitute of religion cannot but see, and multitudes have the honesty and frankness to acknowledge, the *improvement of moral character* which religion produces in their Christian relatives; for true religion never fails to produce this effect. It makes its possessor better in all the relations of life. A thousand restraints, too, operate to repress even the natural enmity of the heart towards God, his religion, and his friends.

And here it ought not to pass without notice, that

the friendship of the world, even though it be enmity with God, is often, ay, too often, *conciliated* by the too ready *yielding* of Christians to the *maxims, and customs, and fashions, and follies* of the world. While some, alas! may indulge in these things from their own too great fondness for them, the irrepressible promptings of their own hearts, others err from a mistaken judgment and a desire of exerting a greater and better influence over their irreligious friends. But let it be remembered that Christians gain nothing by such compromises, nor the cause which they profess to espouse. No, not even in the estimation of the votaries or friends of the world. There is *no gain*, surely, where God's favor is forfeited, and the Saviour and the Spirit grieved. For "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father."

But to return from this digression—if, indeed, it be one. Whatever the ground or the degree of attachment and affection between a believer and an unbeliever, death dissolves every such bond, and is the moment when commences an endless separation. They will meet, indeed, at the general judgment. *Meet* did I say? Yes, *all* will be *there*, of every generation and every kindred. Friends and enemies, of each other and of God, will be there. But call you that a *meeting* of friends of each other, but divided into friends and enemies of God, on earth? Hear what the

Judge himself has said with reference to it: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall *separate* them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Again I ask, call you that a *meeting* of those who were friends and kindred, of every tie of endearment here, but here belonged to the different classes of friends and enemies of God? They will, indeed, *see* each other; but it will be a *final look!* The one will ascend to heaven, into which none who die impenitent can ever enter.

3. They will not only be forever separated from all holy beings, but constitute one company of every grade, every depth of sin and wickedness. Hear two sentences from this Book, which establish both these points of separation from all holy beings, and associating together of all the wicked: "And there shall in no wise enter into it (the place of all the holy, or heaven) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life;" "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." "And *whosoever* was not found

written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

What a company! What classes of offenders! What a catalogue of crimes! Multitudes of them were associates here, and called each other *friend*; but they will be enemies—yea, mutual *fiends*—in that world.

But they will not all be of the classes above named. It is not the *grosser* vices and crimes only which lead to banishment from God, and consignment to that world of woe. There is but one way to avoid the same awful doom. Impenitence—whatever may be the external deportment, natural amiability, the civil and social virtues, the keenness and the delicacy of the natural sensibilities—*impenitence* abandons to the same doom. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The rich and amiable young nobleman who refused obedience to the Saviour's command, to sell *all* he had and give to the poor, was as *unfit* for heaven and as *sure* to perish (persisting in that disobedience) as the most abandoned sinner. Ah, many publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,—not, indeed, in that character, but like the once vile Ephesians, "washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of God,"—while many a strict moralist will be excluded! The existence or the absence of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will decide the future and eternal destiny of the soul. On these terms the vilest have been, and will be, par-

done, and sanctified, and justified, and glorified. Without compliance with them, the amiable and moral will perish. "Without *holiness*, no man shall see the Lord." And the hearts of all, by nature, are equally destitute of holiness; and yet, how carefully, and very properly, and *commendably* is the society of the former description of persons *shunned* by those of the latter! However groundless and unjustifiable many of those distinctions in society are, which have their origin in pride, here is a commendable distinction. The virtuous ought to shun the society of the vicious, save only to reform them and promote their eternal welfare; and this is not *social intercourse*. But how surpassing strange that the moral, the amiable, the naturally lovely, the refined, the cultivated, and even delicately sensitive, who yet have no genuine religion, are themselves impenitent, unbelieving, indifferent, and supremely devoted to sin in other forms—the votaries of the world, in its gains, or honors, or pleasures! And what numbers of this description can everywhere be found in all their sins! O, how *inconsistent*, as well as surpassingly strange, that they can ever think of that *vast congregation* of all who leave the world impenitent, embracing all of every class, of those whose character I have just read to you from God's own word, whose very presence they would shun as pestilence itself, and not be *appalled and overwhelmed* at the thought that *they yet may*, and without becoming Christians *must*, make a part of that

horrid company, that congregation of fallen spirits and abandoned wretches of our race, in the same deep, dark pit of endless despair! For the Judge himself has, beforehand, told us the very sentence he will pronounce on *all* the impenitent in the last day: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the *devil and his angels.*" O, if there is a motive to repentance which can move the impenitent of this congregation, need we search farther for it? I press it especially on those who possess many qualities which claim and receive the respect and approbation of men, but are destitute of those which fit the soul for companionship with the redeemed in heaven.

Once more. Those who leave the world in sin, will continue to sin forever. Sin and misery are indissolubly connected in this world—connected, at least, as *cause* and *effect*, and as certainly if not as closely as any other cause and effect in the physical world. But when all restraints shall be removed—when every gratification will be denied to the strongest desires and impulses of the heart, and sin is seen and felt in its nature and consequences, as it will be when the light of eternity shall present it, sin, then, will be misery itself. It will be the fire which kindles remorse as never felt on earth. The remorse of a Judas, when brought to a full conviction of his awful crime in the betrayal of the Son of God, were but a spark compared with the full blaze which will enwrap the lost soul. Conscious enmity to the holy God, is of itself a hell.

In this world that consciousness slumbers. God is even forgotten by the sinner. His authority is trampled under foot. His law in its purity and holiness is a nullity. Not so in the coming world. Neither God, clothed in all his authority, nor his law, thundering forth its tremendous curses, will, for an instant, be out of mind. His piercing look will kindle unwonted agonies in the soul. O, what a condition must that be to a soul that might have swelled with the love of God, instead of being filled with his wrath! to a soul that might have forever been drinking in the un fading glories of the infinite Godhead! Notes of praise instead of blasphemies might have been that soul's happy employment forever. But unrepented sin in this world doomed it to ceaseless sin in that. But misery must be coexistent with sinning. There can then be no cessation of misery to him who leaves the world in sin, even were all the sins committed here abated and blotted out.

Such, then, are the prospects before those who have no hope, and who shall leave the world with their sins unpardoned; and, unpardoned, because unrepented of. They are, indeed, fearful; and yet I fear, that that self-application will be wanting, which gives to truth its power, and leaves the heart and even conscience unaffected. O, that I could make an appeal which should arouse every sinner from his slumber. I beseech you give this subject your earliest, your most sober consideration. Another hour's delay may

be fatal. God says, to-day—yea, “*Now* is the accepted time.” Dream not of safety for a moment, while unreconciled to God. Lie down in penitence before the Cross. Go to that Being whose love and mercy the very youngest here have already too long abused. Ay, this day might date a heaven begun, to know no end: would, to every repentant soul, secure unutterable glories at death to be multiplying as the ages of eternity rolled on.

V.

THE GREAT RESOLVE.

“And if I perish, I perish.”—ESTHER 4 : 16.

THIS is the language of almost expiring hope. It is, at least, expressive of a determination to make a last effort. It implies the hazard and imminent peril of that which is viewed as of the highest importance. No slight occasion could prompt its utterance. Yet such an emergency is of no uncommon occurrence. Men are not seldom reduced to straits when only one hope of relief remains, and that a trembling one; when only one effort seems to promise success, and that of doubtful issue.

And these were the circumstances in which that individual was placed who uttered the words of my text: they were the words of Esther the Queen, the wife of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, and uttered on an occasion of most painful interest to her and her *nation*; for she was a Jewess: but this was not known to Ahasuerus at the time she became his wife. The circumstances in which she was placed, here referred to, were briefly these:

There was in Shushan, the palace, a certain Jew,

whose name was Mordecai, in what capacity we are not informed. But he was the cousin of Esther, the Queen. Indeed, he was much more than that; for her father and mother being dead, Mordecai took her to his own house, and brought her up as his own daughter. Of this fact, however, the King was evidently ignorant. Nor did he know the nation or religion of his wife.

There was also another man, who had been raised to high honor at that court, whose name was Haman; and because he did not receive those marks of respect from Mordecai to which he felt himself entitled, he sought to revenge himself on him by inducing the King, by most false and foul means, to issue a decree for the destruction of all the Jews within his extensive dominions. The day was fixed for carrying that cruel edict into execution throughout his one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and all the necessary arrangements were made for that purpose. That day was near at hand. Of all these proceedings was Esther ignorant, till informed by her kinsman Mordecai, through one of her attendants. To avert this calamity, an immediate repeal of the decree was indispensable, for the Jews had no means of defending themselves.

But who had sufficient influence with the King to procure its repeal? To whom could they look with as much confidence or any hope of success as to the Queen? And yet when applied to, to intercede

with the King in behalf of the Jews, her reply was the following: "All the King's servants, and the people of the King's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the King, into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live. But *I* have not been called to come unto the King *these thirty days.*"

Mordecai returned for answer: "Think not with thyself, that thou shalt escape in the King's house more than all the Jews. If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther could but die in either case. She then gives the following proper direction, and utters the firm resolve contained in the text: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the King, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

The subsequent part of this most interesting narrative contains the happy result. He in whose hand are the hearts of kings heard the supplications of his people, made the Queen a successful intercessor in their

behalf with the despotic and cruel Ahasuerus. The bloody decree was revoked; Haman, the instigator of it, was executed on the very gallows which he had caused to be erected for Mordecai, and Mordecai exalted to the highest honors in the kingdom. It is scarcely possible to make even a synopsis of this touching narrative. But we have given enough of it for my present purpose.

“If I perish, I perish,” is language, and contains a resolve, not less appropriate and essential, as multitudes are concerned, than in the case of her who first uttered it. Let us make this application of the text:

I. The firm resolve which it expresses is often appropriate to the professed people of God, and in cases which do not involve the extremity of life and death, a resolve, as firm and unyielding as would be required to suffer martyrdom. There are duties oftentimes to be performed, sacrifices to be made, and temptations to be resisted; self-denials to be practised, crosses to be taken up, and many evil influences to be withstood, which require the most unyielding determination on the part of Christians. It was to his *disciples* the Saviour said, “If thy right eye offend thee” (cause thee to offend or lay a stumbling-block before others), “pluck it out, and cast it from thee. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish,

and not thy whole body should be cast into hell." There are sins, therefore, to be avoided, and to which Christians are exposed, that are as dear to the partially sanctified heart as these members of the body; and to sacrifice or rid one's self of these, is scarcely less than martyrdom itself.

The Apostle, too, exhorts: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. For, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

All this is applicable to Christians, and implies or enjoins the avoidance or removal of everything which is not in accordance with all the precepts and examples of the Saviour, and with the high aim and persevering efforts to obtain the crown of life. These hindrances are different with different individuals, depending on different natural dispositions, on attachments and habits formed previously to becoming Christians; these will often return with power on different conditions in life, different pursuits and relationships. These give rise to different temptations. We cannot now enter into particulars, but each may readily ascertain the points of peculiar exposedness. And each will find,

on proper reflection, that to resist and to pursue the only proper course, the firmest resolution and constant application for grace are indispensable, even in cases which do not involve life and death. But life and death are involved here; if not to the Christian whom God will renew to repentance, yet to others, life and death in the highest sense. For sinners will be encouraged and emboldened in their impenitence and sin, by all the failures of Christian professors to live up to their professions. Example exerts a more powerful influence than precept, living than professing; and where these are ever seen in conflict or opposition, the former will be followed. What solemn responsibility, therefore, attaches to the Christian profession! But it is chiefly to a different class, I purposed to apply the text, "If I perish, I perish."

II. It applies with immense force to sinners. It is the starting-point with every sinner who secures his salvation; the life, the endless happiness, or the death, the eternal misery of the immortal soul, is involved; and this, depending on the resolution, or the absence of it, expressed in the text. Who ever reached heaven? Who ever became a Christian, that did not take this stand?

It is demanded from the very nature of the case. Man, by nature, is utterly opposed to that course which God has prescribed to obtain eternal life. He is sold under sin. This he cherishes in some of its thousand forms, with all his heart. Holiness is his

aversion. But "without holiness no man can see the Lord." What then but the most firm and unwavering purpose and determination can induce him to burst those bonds which hold him in his captivity to sin and Satan? What to arouse and direct all his energies to resist it? No man ever accomplished any object of importance without a strong purpose, a purpose bearing some proportion to the importance of that object. Hence the strong expressions in which the salvation of the soul is urged. "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate." The strength of the term *strive* is shown by contrasting it with the term *seek*. "For many, I say unto you, shall *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able." No word expresses stronger effort. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The allusion is to the earnestness with which a fortified city is stormed. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;" *first* in a superlative sense, *i. e.*, supremely. This, too, we find exemplified in numerous instances of successful endeavor, as recorded in this book. The prodigal son expressed and followed the highest purpose of his soul when he said, "I will arise and go to my father;" "And he arose and came to his father." But an appeal to every Christian will supersede the necessity of quoting particular instances. Every Christian, and every true convert, though constrained to acknowledge and lament the feebleness of his resolves, their frequent violations, yet knows also that

they were the strongest ere he entertained a solid hope of heaven : that he devoted his highest energies to the attainment of that end.

This is most reasonable, for what object is as important? What are all other interests compared with this? “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” What is this world to an inhabitant of eternity? “He brought nothing into this world, and it is certain he can carry nothing out.” As the only alternative, therefore, is to save or to lose the soul—of being eternally happy or eternally miserable—what is reasonable if not the highest resolve and the most devoted energies to secure the one and avoid the other? Everything which affects the interests, the well-being of man is involved.

But there is one class to whom we would specially apply the test. It is to those, who, instead of being unconcerned are deeply anxious; who put forth many efforts to secure salvation, but not succeeding, they are discouraged. This state of mind does not always prove that they are not pursuing the right course. The manifestations of Divine mercy are sometimes deferred to prove their sincerity—to test their perseverance. There are not a few instances of this course of the Divine dealings, towards those who applied to the Saviour for his blessing, recorded in the New Testament. In some cases, he made as though he did not hear their importunities. In others, he

appeared even to throw difficulties and obstacles in their way. In other instances there was delay. The object was to test their sincerity, to try their faith, to put their perseverance to the proof. This proved, not for *his* information, but for their own benefit, he never turned such aside, never rejected their suit. This is his more common, I might, perhaps, say his uniform course. Pardon follows the instant of repentance, and justification the instant of faith in Christ.

But peace does not instantaneously follow these exercises. There is a state of painful conviction and doubt, through which every true convert passes, of longer or shorter duration. But whatever may be the cause of discouragement, whether it be on the part of the Saviour, for the trial of their faith and perseverance, or for some criminal deficiency on their part, some lurking spirit of self-righteousness, some notion of merit, some reservation, or, whatever may be the cause, the firm resolve expressed in the text is the only course that can insure success. "If I perish, I perish." Perish the sinner must, who, in view of every obstacle and discouragement, does not adopt this as his resolve. Instances are not uncommon—not unlikely the experience of some present furnish them—of deep anxiety and pain, bordering on despair, and the unhappy subject is in utter doubt what to do—whether to give up all for lost, even the loss of the soul. Some have taken that decision, and gone back to the world, and whose last state became worse than

their first, and finally perished, as we have reason to believe. Ah, that was an hour of awful peril, and is so to all in similar circumstances. The only safe step, the only step of possible safety, is pointed out in my text, "If I perish, I perish." On this decision, this resolve, is depending the salvation of the soul. This not taken, there is no evidence of the Spirit's saving influence in any of the previous exercises. The sinner has been the subject only of his awakening and convicting power, and left there, he must perish. Nor is there, in truth, any real cause of discouragement to one placed in the most painful circumstances. These only the more powerfully urge to an entire surrender of himself to the Saviour, with the resolve, "If I perish, I perish." None who took this stand ever perished. Men make resolves, and firm resolves, with infinitely less prospect of success, and in things of infinitely less importance. This was the case with the individual whose words furnish my text. There was, in her case, scarcely a ray of hope. A solemn edict or decree had gone forth, and it was a fundamental principle in the Persian government that no law could be repealed. No substitute for it could be accepted. No one could even approach the King when in the "inner court," where it would seem he spent most of his time, on the penalty of death, "except to such to whom the king should hold out the golden sceptre." This law or regulation had no respect to persons or rank. It was the same law for the Queen

as for the meanest of the subjects. Nor had she any more reason to think the king would hold out to her the golden sceptre than to another, in whose presence she had not been for thirty days. Besides, he was a cruel despot. God's laws, indeed, are ir repealable. "Till heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." But the Divine government admitted the doctrine of substitution. It allowed another, of suitable qualifications, to take the place of the actual transgressor. Jesus Christ possessed those qualifications. He took the sinner's place, suffered the penalty which the sinner incurred, and thus satisfied Divine justice in regard to every believer in Christ. Hence the Apostle thus writes, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." Instead of a law, therefore, which forbids the sinner's approach to God, to an Almighty Saviour, every necessary provision has been made to encourage his approach to him. He has issued the most pressing invitations. He has arrayed before him the most commanding motives. He has required him, by all the weight of his Divine authority, to come to him and receive eternal life at his hands. God has, moreover, expressly, and under all the solemnities of an oath, declared his unwillingness that any sinner should perish. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

The sceptre which God holds out to the sinner who would approach it, is a sceptre of pity and infinite mercy. It is a token, not of mere *permission* to approach, but of *earnest importunity* to approach—not a mere pledge against *death*, but an assurance of *life eternal*. It is an emblem of Almighty power, not to *destroy*, but to *save*; and save to the uttermost all who come to God by Jesus Christ. Where, then, is the cause of despondency or discouragement? It is not on the Saviour's part, but on the sinner's part. There is something which he withholds, some reservation, some idol he cannot abandon, some sin he cannot relinquish. And while this exists he cannot be saved. God will not accept a divided heart. Indeed, a divided heart there cannot be, as he is concerned. He has the *whole*, or none at all. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will love the one and hate the other, or hold to the one and despise the other. He that is not for me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." There is not one moment of *neutrality*. Every one is unceasingly engaged in what is inseparably connected with his eternal destiny.

Our subject is well calculated to bring every sinner to immediate decision. The utmost danger is involved in an hour's delay. Its magnitude and imminence do

not arise wholly from their constant liability to have their term of probation closed; nor even from the fact that life or death must be the final issue; but the *aggravated* condemnation consequent on the rejection of a salvation so fully, so freely, so urgently pressed on the sinner's acceptance. Were not every obstacle, on God's part, entirely removed; were there any ground of question whether the highest efforts of the sinner would be successful or not; any doubt whether forgiveness followed sincere repentance, or justification faith in Christ, even perdition itself were less intolerable than it will be, to one who knows what an infinite provision has been made, and how earnestly it is pressed on the sinner's acceptance by God himself. Not only has every sinner been made *welcome* to eternal life, but every conceivable motive presented to engage him to secure it. What, then, must be the doom of him who perishes, as we must perish, if we do, with all our knowledge of what has been done to save us?

And must it be that any of you will perish?

O take, at least, take the subject into serious consideration. Examine it as a matter of infinite moment. Dismiss it not, with the promise of attending to it at a future time. Why should an interest of such importance be put off for a single hour? What time, should years be before you, can be more favorable than the present? Why hazard the salvation of the immortal soul another moment? While God is as ready

now as he ever will be, your unwillingness will increase on every postponement of this mighty subject, till you may become wholly indifferent. You have not to make your suit to a despot. There is no uncertainty as to the issue, the favorable issue, the happy and glorious issue of an earnest application to Him who holds your eternal destiny in his hands. Resolve to make the issue. I beseech you, by the infinite mercy of God—the tender pity and compassion of the Son of God, and all his agonies to save sinners, make your application to-day—and make it at the very worst, even from the borders of despair, were that the unhappy condition of any one here, with the fixed, unyielding determination, “If I perish, I perish.” This resolve must be made, or the soul must perish. There is no other alternative. It may be made at once. It may be made now in your seats—no formality is required to make it. It is not made to man. It is no committal before men. It is not a promise to man. No man has a right to exact or impose such a promise. The resolve is made to God. It is made by the heart, and with the whole heart. In a word, it is an unconditional, unreserved surrender of the heart to God, in obedience to his own command, “My son, give me thy heart.”

This implies the consecration of all else to God ; all he has and all he is. I repeat, it may be done by every anxious, *self-despairing* sinner, now in his seat in the house of God. Yes, better done *now* than at

an hour's postponement. The Saviour will never be more ready to receive the sinner's submission than *now*. He now waits for this; the Spirit now urges to this. Numerous successful examples encourage to this. There is no salvation short of the act of the heart's surrender to God; and there may be none to any sinner who shall leave this house without it. The Spirit, farther grieved, may take his final departure. This moment he is gently whispering, if not powerfully urging every sinner here, to go, with all the burden of his guilt, in all his helplessness and hopelessness, from every other source of relief, to the Saviour. He is more than holding out a sceptre of mercy—he is stretching forth an almighty arm to take you and draw you to himself. If you turn away from him, it may be but this once he may even take back the offer of life, withdraw his Spirit, and leave you to your own chosen way to perish.

VI.

RESISTANCE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.”—ACTS 7 : 51.

THIS is one of the most awful charges that were ever brought against any sinner. None involves more tremendous consequences. Mankind sustain a peculiar relation to the Holy Spirit. He, too, sustains a peculiar relation to the other Persons of the adorable Godhead in the great scheme and work of human salvation. Without his agency, nothing which the Father ever proposed or the Son ever performed, would be of any avail to one of our race. Each Person has his appropriate, essential work to perform. In some respects, the Spirit sustains a *peculiarly prominent position*. To him a singular *sacredness* is attached; a peculiar solemnity is associated with his very name. Hear what the Saviour said: “Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the

Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." This is "the sin unto death." Indeed, God seems to have inspired the very nature of man with *special awe* towards the Holy Ghost; for from the lips of the most profane wretch we seldom hear that sacred name pronounced.

The charge contained in the text, it should be remarked, *constantly* lies against the sinner who has not yielded to the influences of the Holy Spirit: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Nor was it brought against those only who may have committed crimes of a peculiarly aggravated nature: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." Stephen, who uttered the words of the text, had no particular reference to the crime of putting the Saviour to death, although this was true of at least some of them; nor of their murderous intention to put himself to death. He refers back even to the days of Moses and all the prophets. Neither the language of the charge, nor the character of those against whom it was brought, necessarily implied the crime of the unpardonable sin. Against one of them, we know it did not. Saul of Tarsus was one of them, and he became the eminent Apostle Paul; and the *character* which Stephen gave of them all, is equally applicable to all impenitent sinners who live under the light of the Gospel: "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." I need not say that these

terms are often employed as descriptive of sinners generally.

My object, therefore, in this discourse, is not to show certain aggravated cases of guilt, to which the sin of resisting the Holy Ghost attaches, but to state some particulars in which it is equally true, and to which the text equally applies, but of which the sinner has, perhaps, no suspicion—particulars in regard to which he may be wholly unaware that he is guilty of the crime of resisting the Holy Ghost. We shall pass over, therefore, those high offences of the unpardonable sin, the murder of the Son of God, the persecution of the saints unto the death, and all those instances of notorious wickedness of which none of you may be guilty. I shall address myself to any and to every impenitent sinner, whatever his age, whatever the peculiar traits of his character, and show wherein this weighty charge lies against him. But let me premise one thing,—that ever since the death of Christ, the whole work of saving the soul is devolved on the Holy Spirit. The Saviour finished his work when he expired on the Cross. It was his own declaration. In the expiring moment he cried, “It is finished!” and bowed his head and gave up the ghost. What remains in the application of his work belongs to the Spirit. His resurrection was the mere seal of the Divine approbation, and a pledge of the salvation of all who sleep or die in him. His intercessions are carried into effect only by the Spirit: see the 16th

chapter of John. *First*, then, indifference to the means of salvation is resistance to the Holy Spirit. Those means owe their origin to him. They are all comprised in those truths which he inspired. This book contains them all. The Spirit employs no others. The Apostles employed no others. Paul most explicitly declared that it was by the Gospel sinners were begotten again. He expressly excludes everything else. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Resistance of the Spirit does not always imply direct, active opposition. Our Saviour said to his disciples, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and him that sent me." There is always some degree of contempt when there is indifference, especially to what is of infinite concern to man, and called forth the highest energies of the Eternal Spirit to secure to man. And this is just the case with both man and the Holy Spirit. We are apt to ascribe, I apprehend, less concern, less engagedness, and less solicitude to the Spirit, in regard to the salvation of sinners, than to either of the other Divine persons—that the Holy Spirit, in performing his part of the great work of redemption makes, if I may use the word, a less sacrifice, receives fewer provocations, than either the Father

or the Son, and especially the Son. We can easily conceive the tender yearnings of the Father's heart, in giving up his Son to such deep humiliation, such sufferings, and to such a death, and of the Son in thus voluntarily taking the sinner's place, and enduring what he did. But a moment's proper reflection will show us the error and the injustice of such a discrimination and distinction. Their perfect unity and equality at once forbid such a supposition. Their feelings on this, and on everything else, are necessarily the same in nature, and infinite in degree. Their respective works are indeed different—the Father accomplished his when the whole arrangement of the mighty plan was made—the Son accomplished his, in everything absolutely essential, when he made an all-sufficient atonement, and himself exclaimed, "It is finished," and in his prayer to his Father said, "I have accomplished the work thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, come I unto thee." Not so the Spirit. His work will not be accomplished till the last heart is regenerated and sanctified, and the soul is wholly fitted for heaven. It is his office-work to apply the whole provision that has been made—to secure to the Son the full promise of the Father, that his people shall be willing in the day of his power, and that he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. And meets he with no opposition in his work? How hard the heart on which he must operate, how obstinate the will, how corrupt the sinner's whole nature,

how blind, how opposed to his highest interests, to secure which so much has been done and suffered. How hard to awaken him to a sense of his danger. How often are his gentlest influences repelled, his kindest invitations utterly slighted—for the record of every invitation, every expostulation, every warning, every entreaty which this Sacred Book contains, was by his own inspiring influence. “All Scripture was given by inspiration of God,—holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Hence we are told of his being vexed—of his being grieved. Even his own people, at times, quench his tenderest and gentlest influences. Alas! what provocations do sinners give him!

Now, to be indifferent to all these, to be utterly regardless of what has cost Heaven so much, and of what the Spirit has done and is constantly doing; can such a state be properly characterized by any softer name than that of resistance? There are different degrees of resistance, and which mark different degrees of guilt, according to the scantiness or abundance of the means possessed, and the urgency with which they are enforced. It is no slight offence to reject, or not comply with the very first offer of life. Repeated rejection is an increased aggravation. But

2. We have been supposing much less than what actually and necessarily exists under the light of the Gospel. Entire indifference cannot exist under such circumstances. Our Saviour has declared every man

to be against him, who is not for him; and that every man who does not gather with him, scatters abroad. If this is true of all mankind, most emphatically is it true of those who have the light of the Gospel. The Spirit's agency is much more extensive, as well as particular, than is generally suspected. His influence is concerned in every serious thought, as well as painfully awakened feeling. It is not the deeply convicted sinner only that is the subject of it, but he that ever thinks seriously of his condition and his prospects for eternity. Conscience never utters its voice but under the Spirit's influence. In this sense, at least, he strives with all men. But how much more powerfully with those who possess his revealed truth, and that truth daily enforced by the events of Providence, against the voice of which he can neither close his ears, nor wholly steel his heart. There is not a sinner on earth thus situated, with whom the Holy Spirit does not daily strive. And when serious thoughts and reflections are dismissed or suppressed because of the pain they give, when they are not cherished as that on which the salvation of the soul may be depending, then is the crime of resisting the Holy Ghost committed. And yet, what multitudes suspect it not! How even unconscious of that offence is the generality of the impenitent! How little, or never think, that these are the kind and gentle monitions of the Spirit; and hence, if ever they expect to be saved, they are waiting to experience his overwhelming power, and

till they experience *that*, excuse themselves for remaining as they are. This is the very reason why most of those who are saved, are thrown into a state of agonizing conviction. This becomes necessary to break up this delusion. The sinner will remain under its influence without this painful process. David has well described their state in the following words: "They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." The Holy Spirit would woo the sinner to repentance; but he will not hearken to his gentle whispers.

3. A rational conviction of the great truths of the Gospel, while there is no hearty approbation and practical manifestation of them, is an advanced stage of resistance of the Spirit, but may exist with little or no suspicion of that offence. There is no necessary connection between the knowledge and the love of the truth. They are as distinct as the intellect and the heart. Truth, when clearly discovered, has an inherent power over the former. It is impossible not to believe that of which we have clear evidence. But it has no such power over the heart. Here, a foreign influence is absolutely necessary. This is too obvious to require illustration. It comes within the constant experience of every man. The sinner believes there is a just and holy, sin-hating and sin-punishing God, while he would infinitely rather believe there were either no God, or a God of all mercy. He believes

there is a hell, while, with all his heart, he wishes there were only a heaven, or what he would desire heaven to be. Such a conflict between an enlightened understanding and the heart—between an informed conscience and deferred inclination, is as common as mere speculative believers. Yet to withhold the heart, to reject and disobey under such circumstances, in opposition to rational conviction, is an aggravated state of resistance. It is pronouncing sentence against oneself. And yet whole multitudes are in that condition, and scarcely have a suspicion that they are offering direct resistance to the Holy Spirit. He operates upon and through the understanding, as well as directly on the conscience and the heart. Enlightenment precedes sanctification.

Ignorance of the truth, while the means of information are within one's reach, is a great sin. But a knowledge and conviction of it, and of its importance, without a heart to love and practise it, is a much greater one, and argues a much stronger resistance of that Divine Agent, who is the author of both. Yet how little concern is manifested by such! On the contrary, it often serves only to increase self-security, and gives rise to a false hope. But this is resistance of the Holy Spirit.

4. A delay to secure salvation, founded on a present resolution of timely repentance, is still an advanced stage of resistance of the Holy Spirit. The very *resolution* implies a conviction of danger, and of the abso-

lute necessity of religion in order to avoid it. But whence that conviction of danger, and of that necessity? It implies some alarm. But who produced it? It is the Spirit. The sinner is *dead* in trespasses and sins. It is the Spirit that quickeneth: he alarms, or the sinner would remain in all his self-security, blind to his character and his true condition. It requires some just views of his true state and future prospects even to drive one to form a resolution seasonably to attend to the great subject of his salvation. This is the very condition in which most sinners are who live under the light of the Gospel. Perhaps, we scarcely need make an exception, if they ever have moments of serious reflection. Why those resolutions, but to lessen apprehension—to allay or prevent alarm? And is not that resisting the Holy Ghost? Is it not daring presumption? Are not such calculations on continued life, and more favorable opportunities, and stronger influences of the Spirit, made amid a thousand contingencies?

The *cause* of postponement is *dislike* to the subject itself; sin is preferred to holiness, and this world to heaven.

No sinner ever delayed this important work under the pretence or plea of a more favorable coming opportunity, with any *real belief* or *sincere desire* that any such opportunity will ever come. He never really expects it; he knows, indeed, that if spared to old age, which probably he does expect, he will lose, if not his

relish yet his *capacity*, for enjoying this world, and that religion alone can furnish a substitute, or that, without it, he must be miserable here as well as hereafter. It is this, and this only, that ever influenced an impenitent sinner to defer his salvation, or ever prompted the resolution to attend to it at some future time. A moment's serious, candid reflection, would convince every delaying sinner of the most daring *insincerity* of all his pleas for postponing the subject, and that his present resolves are awful presumptions. Consider, then, how the Holy Spirit must regard such a one. What has he said in the Book of his inspiration? "Choose ye *this day* whom ye will serve. *To-day*, if ye will hear his voice. *Now* is the accepted time, behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

Let these instances suffice, in which men are liable to the charge contained in the text, of resisting the Holy Ghost, but under which they are insensible to the awful fact. There are, it is true, cases of a more aggravated character—cases of a more direct and powerful influence of the Spirit, producing deep and painful convictions of guilt and danger, and which have called forth a more direct and daring resistance. But it has not fallen within the object of this discourse to consider such cases, but such only as fall under the same charge, but of which sinners are unconscious, and the peril of which is, for that very reason, no less imminent. In regard to a subject of such immense and unspeakable importance as the salvation of the

soul, there is no danger so great as where none is suspected. Nor in the cases which have been stated is there the mere *absence* of suspected danger, but there is the *belief* that all danger has been provided against. All men place confidence in their own resolutions, and on no subject is their confidence more unwavering than the resolution of *seasonable* preparation for death and eternity. It falls in with all the cherished inclinations of the natural heart. On no other subject do men so easily deceive themselves; nor, where the means of salvation are possessed, where men hear the Gospel preached, are as many souls lost in any other way, or *all* other ways, as in this. The sinner's intentions to repent at some future time and be prepared for heaven, only tend to endless ruin.

And now let me make, or ask each to make for himself, the proper practical application of this subject. The salvation of how many souls among us may be depending on this, God only knows. May we not express the fear that there are not a few among us, and regular attendants too on the public means of grace, who are in the condition we have attempted to describe—who are in imminent peril, with little or no suspicion of danger, either through entire indifference to the subject or the fondly cherished belief that they have provided against its occurrence?

But against such, if such are here, the awful charge contained in my text lies with fearful weight: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." No sinner, while still

his probation is continued and he is blessed with the means of his salvation, can be placed on more perilous ground. On the agency, the influence of the Holy Spirit, is depending the salvation of every soul. He must quicken it, or it will remain dead in trespasses and sins. He must regenerate it, or it can never see the kingdom of God: "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What impenitent sinner among us would not be *startled* at the thought, if it could once enter his heart with the force of *an undoubted truth*, that the awful charge of resisting the Spirit of God really lies against him? We have endeavored, dear friends, to show that it is so, even in those cases in which the sinner himself least suspects it; we have endeavored to convince you of this most awful and fearful fact—to tear from you this most fatal of all delusions. It is, and always has been, the most successful of all the artifices of the great Adversary of souls. Around every careless, thoughtless, or not deeply awakened sinner, he has spread this fatal net, and while he continues thus, he holds him in its meshes.

But there is an Omnipotent arm extended towards you for your deliverance. Seize that arm; listen to the voice which urges you to this. That voice is not silent *to-day*. The Holy Spirit is, at least, addressing you in gentle whispers. Close not the ear against them; yield to his tender, persuasive invitations. Leave not this house, where he has again brought

and once more met you, till you have thrown open your heart to him, and entreated his entire possession of it. If one serious thought on the subject of your salvation has been awakened while sitting here, remember, it has been by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Cherish it; dread nothing so much as to suppress or oppose it.

And here, remember one thing, that the object of the Holy Spirit, in all his influences and operations on the sinner, is to bring him to Christ. There is salvation in no other; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Short of entire and hearty surrender to him, the soul is forever lost.

VII.

THE DIFFICULTY OF SECURING THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL,

AS A MOTIVE TO ACTIVE AND EARNEST EFFORT.

“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”—MATTHEW 11 : 12.

ONE of the most common and fatal of all delusions that ever seized the human mind, is the notion that nothing is of easier attainment than eternal life. To what but to this impression can be ascribed that self-security which characterizes all classes of impenitent sinners, and even among those who make no pretension to a single qualification for heaven, and yet profess to believe the absolute necessity of such qualification before death strikes his blow? It is not peculiar to the young, but common to all ages—not more general among those who possess not, than those who enjoy all the means of salvation. Hence the universal disposition to defer and delay the most important work ever proposed, dreaming it enough to utter one cry for mercy just as the soul is entering on its eternal state. But how is this vain notion corrected and re-

proved by the Saviour himself in the text—what stronger language, what more forcible figure could be used than he here employs to express and set forth the ardor of feeling, the strength of purpose, and even violence of effort, necessary to secure the momentous object? “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Heaven is here represented as a citadel, a strongly fortified place, which can only be taken by storm. The figure is unmeaning, unless the same unyielding energy is implied in the one case as in the other. That declaration was made by the Saviour in reference to what was actually occurring at the time he made it, viz., that extensive and wonderful attention to religion of which John the Baptist was the instrument—when, as it is expressed, “there went out to him, Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him, confessing their sins.” Those immense multitudes evidently laid aside everything else to attend on the means of their salvation. And let it be borne in mind, in opposition and solemn reproof of the views and sentiments of multitudes in our own day, that the Saviour, instead of a hint of any excess of engagedness on their part, pronounced his approbation of their conduct, and even solemnly enforced the absolute necessity of the same earnestness on all who would enter into the kingdom of heaven, by the very figure which he employed to illustrate it. “From the days of John the Baptist until

now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." And is there not the same necessity of equal earnestness and unyielding determination *now* as *then*? Are the difficulties fewer or less formidable in our day than in the time of the Saviour's forerunner, or when he himself was on earth? Let us examine this point, that we may be properly convinced, and be the better prepared to appreciate those difficulties, and to feel the force of the motives which they address to us.

1. There is the same depravity—the same opposition of the human heart to overcome now as ever—there is the same pride of heart to be disarmed, in order to the admission and operation of holiness—the same love of self and of sin to be subdued. God and his service are no more objects of the sinner's choice at this age of the world, than at any period since the fall. It is as true now as it ever was, that "the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," and that the "carnal mind is enmity with God, is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." The same necessity of the new birth, as when Christ declared to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Man, by nature, is supremely selfish; and this renders him the determined enemy of God. His pride rises up in fixed opposition to the claims of his Maker. It feeds and swells on what should be renounced and crucified. Hence, that unbelief which locks up the soul against

all proper perception of eternal things, and bars against all proper conviction of sin, and guilt, and even danger. Hence, rebellion and resistance, at every point of demanded subjection and obedience to God. And hence, too, the whole progeny of depraved propensities, passions, and appetites, which proceed from the unsanctified heart. Heaven cannot be obtained—the soul cannot be saved; where the thoughts are seldom or never on God, and where, instead of his having a throne in the heart, that heart is filled with spiritual enemies. True, there is more light and knowledge of divine things than at many other ages of the world. But ignorance is not man's worst condition—light is not the cure of his depravity. Unsanctified knowledge only acts with increased force on the enmity of the natural heart. The most enlightened are not the most easily won to the love of the truth. "The world by wisdom knew not God." The wisdom of men is foolishness with God. Hence "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." The Church of Christ has indeed numbered some of the most eminent and learned, in every age of the world, among her converts and members. But they have been comparatively few. Nor had it been any disparagement of the Christian religion, had there never been one of that standing.

It is the chief glory of the Gospel plan of salvation, that it is equally adapted to the condition and wants of all classes of the human race, while the souls of all are of equal value in God's sight, and equally objects of Divine commiseration, and of the Redeemer's interposition. There is, therefore, nothing in the natural state of the human heart, the entireness and inveteracy of human depravity, the pride of man, his supreme regard of the idol, self, which does not interpose as strong obstacles in the way of his salvation, which does not demand the same earnestness and persevering determination to secure it, as when Christ pronounced the words of the text. The language and the figure are as appropriate now as then, or any other age of the world. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Nor have we any reason to believe that any one now or hereafter ever will become a subject of it, who does not put forth the same firm and indomitable and persevering exertions.

2. There is another source of difficulty in the way of salvation, little, indeed, suspected, or even believed, but for that reason the more formidable. It proceeds from a foreign influence, operating both on the inner man and the objects around him, as incentives and lures adapted to the sinner's state and tastes. The Apostle thus describes it: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."

These are different terms to denote the same malignant, powerful, and ever-vigilant enemy of God and man. Their unceasing and untiring object is to destroy the souls of men; their influence is secret, and, of course, unsuspected, but not the less real; they have access to the heart; they know all the avenues to that fountain of iniquity; they know how to present temptations adapted to its ruling desires and predominant propensities, and how to touch every spring of action. Those enemies to the souls of our fallen race have not yet been bound with chains; they are still permitted to roam abroad, seeking whom they may devour; they still vex the saints, and, if it were possible, would fatally deceive the elect. If we are ignorant of the *mode*, we know the *effects* of their operations. Their object with the *sinner* is to keep him in all his self-security; to fortify him against the force of God's truth; to prevent all alarm, or if alarmed, to quiet his fears; if convicted of his sin and danger, to quench his convictions; to throw around him temptations, drawn from some alluring objects adapted to his governing taste—the ruling passion of his heart—or else suggest some false ground of hope, the denial of fundamental and essential truths, some false and fatal form of religion. Or, if all these fail, then drive the sinner to despair.

And, alas, how often does he accomplish his object! How often does he lead the sinner captive at his will, even while the sinner is unconscious of his influence!

All his suggestions fall in with the natural promptings of the depraved heart; so that *foreign* influence is not even suspected by the sinner. But it is as real as his existence; and *he* is the most under his power who denies or doubts its existence or its agency. But

3. These are not all the difficulties in the way of the soul's salvation. The world in which we live furnishes them in every variety of form. In itself, the world is *good*. When it came from the hand of its Maker, he pronounced it *very good*. It has undergone no change since, which to a holy race would make it otherwise. All its evils have been introduced by *sin*—sin alone has marred it; and all the evils which that monster has introduced, would still leave it comparatively a Paradise to a holy race of beings. Creation and Providence still afford most instructive lessons to man of its Framer and Governor. There is still enough to command the most delightful exercise of all his powers, and joyfully absorb all the affections of a right heart. If there are evils without, to a good man, as unquestionably there are, yet with a heart conformed to God, all these evils would issue in good, and the original curse become a blessing.

But the cause of all evil still exists and operates. It operates in the *entire* man, and this creates the difficulties which the world throws around him, and makes heaven to him a fortified city, which he is required to take as by storm. And these difficulties are numerous and immense—as numerous as the objects

which claim attention and attachment. These captivate the heart; receive its supreme love. Thus the world becomes a mighty pantheon—a vast storehouse of idols, furnished with various images suited to the various ruling propensities of their worshippers. As a *grand whole*, it constitutes a supreme *deity*, and in the general classification of its objects and pursuits presents, as one has expressed it, a powerful “trinity,” viz., “Honor, wealth, and pleasure.”

But what said the Saviour in regard to each of these classes in this grand division of idolaters? To the first: “How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not that honor which cometh from God only?” To the second: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” To the third: “That which fell among thorns are they which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and *pleasures* of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Does not this language, and we often meet with it in similar though somewhat varied forms, teach us that the world throws immense difficulties in the way of the sinner’s salvation?

Is not each of these objects, when supremely pursued, as one or the other necessarily is, with every impenitent sinner, as much an idol as a statue before which one kneels and professedly pays his worship? Idolatry is the supreme love of any being or object but God only. “No man can serve two masters—

ye cannot serve God and mammon." Heaven cannot be secured where the thoughts and affections are supremely on the world and the things of the world. This point we shall not be required to argue. For such a man has no taste, no qualification for the employments of heaven. On the contrary, every view of God's glory, and every note of praise from the redeemed, would fill him with unutterable agony. Is then the language of the Saviour, who knew better than any being who ever trod our earth, too strong, or the figure too bold, when he declared, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force?" But,

Again, though only extending the field of observation on this subject, the difficulties in the way of salvation are even greater and more formidable now, than when the Saviour uttered the words of the text. And they arise from the different conditions of mankind, and different states of society, as existing *then* and existing *now*, especially in civilized and evangelized countries. True, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." The natural state of every human heart is that of entire alienation from God, and will remain so till sovereign grace renew it. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit," and till this change takes place, depravity reigns. But depravity may take a deeper hold on some than on others, may be under less or more restraints; and this may depend

on a thousand things which are external to us, and certainly in no small degree on the state of society—its enlightenment, its customs and fashions, its prevailing pursuits and temptations, and predominant vices. The most enlightened and highly cultivated state is not always the most favorable. It should be so; but facts do not warrant the conclusion that it is so. It was not so in the days of the Apostles. Witness their labors and the results, among the learned of Rome and Athens, compared with their labors and success in Galilee and Samaria, and in other less enlightened portions of the world.

It was this fact which led Paul to exclaim, “that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world and things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things which are, *that no flesh should glory in his presence.*”

The refinements of the world often give rise to refinements in sin; and, what indeed is not less true, so far depress the standard of *morals* as to license the grossest vices. All sins have a common nature, and one sin leads to and adds encouragement to another. Some sins, indeed, are peculiarly *sociable* in their nature; such, for instance, as intemperance and pro-

fanity, Sabbath-breaking and lewdness; so that where we find the one we may confidently expect to find the other. Surely these crimes are not peculiar to a state of ignorance and heathenism! Would that they were! How often is it that among the most enlightened and most abundantly supplied with the means of grace, the Gospel, to a most alarming degree, seems only to harden the heart and sear the very conscience—in a word, to be a “savor of death unto death!” The causes may be various; but the state of society embraces and gives rise to not a few of them. What are boastingly termed its refinements and cultivation, are often mighty barriers and hindrances to the salvation of the soul; immense difficulties in the way to heaven. They withhold, as with a mighty hand, the heart from God. It becomes far more difficult to break asunder those bonds which exist among associates, and tear one’s self away from scenes and companions, whose whole influence is in direct opposition to that of the Gospel. Drowned in pleasure, they are well-nigh certain to be drowned in perdition.

It is no easy thing to resist the destructive influence of the more sober cares, the more reputable employments of the world; but how much more so the captivating, dissipating allurements of the world! It is difficult, when once drawn into the vortex of criminal pleasures, to extricate one’s self. Ah, nothing but Omnipotent grace can effect release and escape! But it is equally true, that that grace will never be imparted

while the sinner puts forth no effort. The voice of God is, "Come out and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." And is not the salvation of the immortal soul worth an effort to comply with that most reasonable demand? What a warfare are even the children of God often obliged to encounter in regard to many things which the *refined* world around them calls not only civil, but *essential* to good society! And if they run not with them to the same excesses, they are reproached, and their names cast out as evil. But where is the hope for those who utterly discard the solemnly binding obligations of religion, and throw up the reins to sensual passions and appetites?

I have but a few remarks to make in closing this discourse. Its appeal is to the unconverted, and, at best, utterly careless. I ask, then, dear hearers, may everything and anything receive your supreme regard, and command all the energies of soul and body, while the salvation of the soul lies neglected? Why is it more unreasonable to be in earnest to save the immortal soul, to secure eternal happiness, when compelled to leave this world, than to gather riches, attain to honors, or indulge in worldly pleasures? And yet, by multitudes, how are all attempts to produce engagedness in the highest concerns of the soul, its unchangeable, endless destiny, resisted, and often frowned down, and even *laughed down!*

And yet this mighty object must become the all-

absorbing one—must command supreme attention, or, as my text was the solemn utterance of Him who came to save the soul, this mighty object will never be secured. A few serious, and even sincere wishes, occasional resolves, or some fitful efforts, will not secure it. God has said: “Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye search for me with *all the heart*.” And short of this, the promise will never be realized. This is the starting-point. There is no step towards heaven but from this point.

Why will you not anticipate that solemn hour when nothing else will be regarded of the least concern? When the whole world, with all its wealth, and honors, and pleasures, will appear a mere bauble—a painted bauble, to cheat you of endless bliss? That hour is not distant, when he who comes to it in his sins will see his folly and his guilt in a light which no language can express. Is there a sinner here who will thus rush upon the scenes of that hour, and to the awful doom which awaits the soul in eternity? Can any one here consent to come to an impenitent death-bed? to lie and languish with a conscience then quickened to the highest degree of sensibility, with all the sins of his past life gathered into a moment, and all his *then* deep consciousness of his guilt but a faint foretaste of the wretchedness soon and eternally to overwhelm him?

Believe it not that this is fancy. Unnumbered spirits, could they be released from hell and suffered

to come back to our world to give their testimony, would confirm its truth. Will any of you add to their numbers? Shall this be the dying testimony—this the miserable end of one in this assembly?

One hour's delay to make the salvation of the soul the supreme concern, and you may be left to give this testimony and swell that number. A disregard of this day's privileges and opportunity to repent and secure eternal life, may lead to all these consequences. The decree may go forth, "Let him alone—he is joined to his idols!"

VIII.

THE RUIN OF THE SOUL EFFECTED BY NEGLECT.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”—HEB. 2 : 3.

THIS is a question in form only; often the strongest mode of affirming the truth. There is not a passage in all this book which implies more, or more important truths than the text announces. The salvation to which it refers, embraces all that God in His three-fold personality has done, to provide for the endless happiness of man; involving the eternal misery of all who fail to secure the blessings proposed, including the mode which he has prescribed, in which alone those blessings can be obtained, or that misery avoided. And what facts or truths are as deeply interesting to man as these? In these respects alone, it may well be pronounced a “*great salvation.*” Great, as heaven is desirable, or hell dreadful. But it assumes a still higher character, when we call to mind what it cost to make the provision. The gift, the incarnation, and the death of God’s own and equal Son. It is with direct reference to this, the Apostle introduces the text, and which is set forth in the preceding chap-

ter to that which contains the text. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And did not innumerable facts establish the contrary, we could hardly have conceived it possible, that an individual of our fallen race, who ever heard the Gospel preached, could be found to reject or neglect the salvation which it proffers. The depraved ingenuity of man has, indeed, devised many schemes as substitutes for that of the Gospel, but they are all refuges of lies; while still greater numbers appear to be satisfied with their prospects for eternity, on the simple ground that they manifest no hostility or opposition to the plan of salvation which the Gospel proclaims.

While the text addresses a solemn admonition to all who, by any means, or in any way, fail of this salvation, it makes its appeal more especially to the latter class—to the careless, and indifferent, and negligent. Were it necessary to describe this class, it may be done in few words. They are those on whom divine truth makes no sensible or salutary impression; who remain still the same in all their self-security. The writer of the text has described them in a subsequent chapter: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." They did not so believe it as to produce any good effect on their hearts and lives. It is to such now

I address the sentiment of the text, "How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?" That sentiment is,—*simple neglect* abandons the soul to eternal ruin.

I propose to establish the truth of this sentiment,

I. By the obvious teachings of Scripture. II. From the nature of the salvation which the Gospel proposes.

I. No other possible construction can be put, as it seems to me, on the text. Not a word is said, in connection with it, of violent resistance, or of substituting any other mode. Having stated that a "great salvation" had been effected and proclaimed by God's equal Son, and which engaged all the angels in heaven to minister to man's interest in it, the Apostle adds, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Violent opposition unquestionably aggravates the guilt of the individual who fails to secure its blessings, but neglect through indifference will as certainly end in the ruin of the soul. This is as certain as that the neglect of food will as effectually be the death of the body, as though one should lay violent hands on himself, or as he who neglects to sow his seed will have no crop.

Our Saviour has most forcibly taught this truth in the parable of the talents, in his reproof and condemnation of the servant who received the one talent, but who had made no improvement of it. "His Lord said unto him, Thou wicked, slothful servant! Take the talent from him, and cast ye the unprofitable servant

into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Men are intrusted with nothing more valuable than the privileges of the Gospel; no talents more important, no possessions to which they will be held to a stricter account, than the means of grace, and the opportunities of their salvation; and neglect is a forfeiture of all the blessings which they were intended to secure. This truth, moreover, is taught and enforced by the urgency with which the salvation of the soul is pressed upon us. I scarcely need say to you that the salvation of the soul is everywhere set forth in this book as the great work of men—that for which God gave him his existence, unless, by his perversion, he himself renders that existence an eternal curse to himself; that for which God has blessed us with all the necessary means of saving our souls. What, then, can mark a higher offence against God, or against one's own soul, than to neglect them all? It implies a recklessness in regard to one's own highest interests, and a contempt of God and all he has done to save men, which can hardly be surpassed.

But not to dwell longer on a point so plain, I remark,

II. That this position is sustained by just views of the nature of Gospel salvation. What is this salvation? What does it propose? What is it as experienced here and enjoyed hereafter in heaven? In its beginning, its progress, and its consummation? For it has its beginning in this world. It is not a mere

negative good—mere exemption from the penalties of God's violated laws—mere freedom from punishment. Were it possible to experience this, and this only, this were not Gospel salvation. The salvation which God has provided, and which he offers to us, is "redemption from the bondage of sin and liability to eternal death, and the *conferring of everlasting happiness.*" Sin, then, must not only be pardoned, but its power subdued; its bondage must be broken, and the soul be freed from its controlling influence. Sin must not reign in our mortal bodies; its dominion must be crushed. Is that consistent with indifference?—with neglect? Is it a small achievement? Where is, or when lived the individual of our fallen race, who, of himself, ever accomplished this mighty work? Never lived the Christian who took that honor to himself. They all speak the same language on this point, however much they may differ on other points; their grateful exclamation, without a dissenting voice, is: "By the grace of God, I am what I am." The feeling of self-impotence is the very first hopeful or favorable indication in the case of any sinner. What, previously to this, is the moral condition of sinners? They are, indeed, of different grades; and while all wax worse and worse, till they become new creatures in Christ, some attain to the stature of giants in iniquity. But what are they, or rather, what is unsanctified human nature as a mass? The Scriptures are full and explicit on this point: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is

only evil continually;" "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;" "What is man that he should be clean, who drinketh iniquity like water?" "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God." And what was the result? "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good; no, not one."

Let us go back to an earlier date in the existence of each and every human being: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "The wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies." "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child." "The heart of the sons of men is full of iniquity." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Hence, the Saviour's own argument for the new birth: "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Paul says to the Ephesian Christians, "Ye were by nature children of wrath, even as others." But I need not quote farther. The above, however, are mere specimens of what the Bible is full. Such is human nature as a whole; such are its attributes, as every human being advances in life, till sovereign grace renews his nature, restores the effaced moral image of his Maker, and breathes new life into his soul, or he is left to go on and perish. Here is the very necessity of Divine interposition. I repeat, this *felt* as it should be, and as by every true convert it is felt, is the first favorable indication of such Divine in-

terposition. This is the low spot into which every sinner here must be brought that ever rises to heaven.

And can all this consist with indifference?—with neglect? Is it nothing to repent?—to hate what is supremely loved, and the converse? Even the best Christian finds it no easy task to resist the sinful impulses of his partially sanctified heart. With all his means, and habitually cherished influences of the Spirit, and practice of earnest prayer to God, he makes but little progress, slow advances in preparation for salvation, full and perfected in heaven. And can the negligent sinner expect that salvation? Has he not the same enemies to encounter, to conquer?—the same depraved impulses to resist and suppress?—the same “old man” to crucify? Has the soldier of Christ no battles to fight?—his follower, no race to run?

The Apostle Paul presents this subject in two distinct, yet necessarily connected points of view, in which let us for a moment consider it. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he writes: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Here, then, are some things to be renounced, to be laid aside, to be “put off.” These things embrace all the peculiar characteristics of an unrenewed man; all

wrong desires, passions, and purposes; every sinful habit of speech and conduct. Sins as dear as the right hand or right eye are cheerfully to be sacrificed, abandoned. This suppressing, subjugating, crucifying process neglected, and there is no salvation for the soul. This, need I say, is no easy task.

But this is only one view of the subject, as the Apostle has presented it. The opposites of what is peculiar to an unrenewed state are to be substituted in their place: "the new man must be put on;" supreme love of God must take the place of supreme love of the world; and even enmity against God, "for the carnal mind is enmity against God;" rebellion must yield to obedience; selfishness, as a governing principle, to God's glory; the pleasures of sin, in all its forms, to the approbation of God. Perfect salvation in heaven can consist only with a perfect renovation of the whole moral man: "That ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God" (*i. e.*, like to God), "is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The contrast between these two states of nature and grace, as drawn by the pen of inspiration, and as actually seen in the lives of true Christians, is so great, that the latter are called "new creatures," "created anew in Christ Jesus;" become such by a new birth, have new desires, new principles of action, new sources of joy. Yet all this is only partially true of those most eminent for piety in this life. How infinitely

more striking the difference between the redeemed in heaven and the unrenewed in this world! In that world all is perfect holiness; the conflict between sin and grace is forever ended; love supreme and intense unceasingly swells the hearts of all its inhabitants.

Now, *this* is the salvation which the Gospel proposes, and which by every consideration that can be presumed to influence a rational being, and especially one of our race, for whom it has been provided, is urged on the acceptance of every one who ever listened to its messages; and to render this available, the Divine Author of it has appointed the only means by which it can be secured. It is by these means that it is commenced in this life and perfected in the next. How, then, can the sinner escape the fearful penalties of God's violated law, which is eternal death, in the neglect of those means? Were God, by a mere act of his sovereignty, to remit those penalties, what preparation would that be for the enjoyment of a heaven of perfect holiness? How could the soul be happy in heaven? A mere act of pardon would be no qualification for the actual employments of that world. It is true, that in the economy of grace, pardon involves everything else that is necessary. God never pardons without repentance; and the grace which produces repentance is, at the same time, sanctifying; nor is it ever withholden till the soul is wholly fitted for heaven: "For he that hath begun a good work will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ."

Mere pardon, however, were at most but a *negative* qualification for heaven. The Apostle, as we have seen, carries this point much farther. It is not enough to “put off” what he terms “the old man, with his corrupt deeds”—that is, in few words, to suppress and extirpate all the sinful propensities and practices of his corrupt nature, or natural state; but “the new man” must be “put on;” the sinner must be renewed in the spirit of his mind; there must be positive holiness. The distinction is obvious, although God has been pleased inseparably to connect them; so that where there is the one, there will also be the other. It is to cease one course and pursue a directly opposite course.

Whatever view we take of salvation, it is an immensely difficult work to accomplish—a work in opposition to which the whole nature of man is arrayed. It falls in with none of the principles of the natural man; and the longer it is deferred, the more strength they acquire: “The whole soul,” as one expresses it, “gravitates toward the earth, and it is as unnatural for it to rise to God, as it is for the body to ascend to heaven.” There are difficulties in the salvation of the soul to be overcome greater than ever beset any other work. Every figure employed in the Bible to set it forth shows this: such as *running*, *wrestling*, *fighting*, *agonizing*.

And how are all these difficulties to be overcome? No man ever conquered them, though by Omnipotent

grace, without strong, determined, and persevering effort. What, then, let me ask, is likely to be the end of those among us who are putting forth no such effort? We address you now, not as violent opposers of your salvation, but simply as neglecters of it; for, probably, there is not one here who does not *expect* to be saved, and that, too, not by any plan or method of his own, as different from that which the Gospel prescribes, but in the way which the Gospel does point out. None of you, probably, are quarrelling with God's method to save sinners. It were, indeed, more hopeful if you were; it would, at least, show interest in the subject. The state of indifference which simple neglect shows, is the most hopeless of all states. Nothing but a resurrection power can arouse such. It argues a self-security from which one will not be likely to awake, but slumber on, dreaming perhaps of heaven, till he awake in eternity. What multitudes are thrown on the bed of their last sickness in that state, and then feel no apprehensions in regard to their eternal condition till the symptoms of death are thick upon them, and are then left in hopeless agony, or a presumptuous confidence in God's mercy!

Far more souls perish from neglect of the means of their salvation, with the intention of finally securing it, than from all other causes. Nothing like this lulls the soul to so deep a sleep.

And is not this the very condition of far the greater portion of the impenitent? What else can shield

against the arrows of conviction under the constant sound of the Gospel? And yet, what a gross self-deception! There is not, in itself, a more alarming condition than that in which *no alarm* is felt. It is God's method to alarm the sinner whom he means to save. But to feel no alarm, no special anxiety, in the possession of all the means of salvation under the constant proclamation of the Gospel, argues a state of peculiar hopelessness.

The charge of neglecting the great salvation does not lie against the man only who never places himself under the influence of any of the means of grace which God has appointed—the man who never reads the Bible, never visits the house of prayer, and pays no respect to the Sabbath. One of the most fearful charges which the Saviour brought against sinners was, that the kingdom of heaven had come *nigh* to them, while yet they refused to enter in. Just in proportion to the abundance of the means of salvation, while unimproved, will be the sinner's doom. The more we know of the greatness of that salvation which God has provided for our guilty race, and yet neglect it, the more guilt we contract, and the more weighty will be our condemnation. Of *that* we are fully informed. We have learned far more than the simple fact of God's willingness to save men. He has told us *how* this has been accomplished, at what an immense price the provision has been made; he has taught us every step in the whole process by which

man's redemption has been wrought out; he has given us his own judgment of the infinite importance of that work, the immense value of the thing to be redeemed, the immortal soul of man.

It is an infinitely great salvation, as God himself has been concerned in it. Nothing less than the gift and sacrifice, by a most cruel death, of his only Son. But the object, as man is concerned, was a great one,—redemption of the soul from eternal death, and bestowing eternal happiness. O, how deep must be the stupidity and guilt of the man who feels not the force of such considerations! “How shall he escape, if he neglect such a salvation?”

But it must be secured soon, or never. Should not God take back the offer till the dying hour, that is not very distant, and much nearer than you now imagine. O, is not one day, or even hour, too much to lose, and especially with those who have already lost many years? Nor is the hazard scarcely less with the youngest. There is the same native depravity in every natural heart to be subdued; the same God to love; the same salvation, and on the same terms, to secure: and the first step, in the case of any one, is to see his danger, feel his guilt and his helplessness, and cast himself on the sovereign grace of God. Take God's law for your instructor, and you cannot fail to see your danger; take his Gospel for your guide, and you cannot mistake the only course of safety. There is, indeed, no need that one should perish. “He that spared

not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," is still on a throne of mercy. There is nothing in the way of the salvation of any one who will go to the Saviour with a penitent heart. It is his own promise: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." There is the same pity in his heart that brought him to our world, and carried him to the cross; he has even spared you to this hour to make you another offer of eternal life. Death, at farthest, will close every opportunity; and death may come at any hour.

IX.

GOD'S DESIRE FOR THE SALVATION OF THE SINNER'S SOUL

LEAVES HIM WITHOUT PLEA OR EXCUSE FOR ITS LOSS.

“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”—
HOSEA 11 : 8.

THIS is strange language for the Infinite Majesty of heaven and earth to use towards guilty, rebellious men. Nor were they sinners of an ordinary character only. They had been selected out from the rest of mankind, and distinguished by many and very great privileges. They had been the objects of special Divine regard, from the very origin of their nation. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.” Such were God’s kind dealings towards them. But intermingled with this statement, the same prophet has written of them, “They

sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images; they knew not that I healed them." "He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, and the sword shall abide in his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them because of their counsels. My people are bent to backsliding from me."

Such, briefly, had been God's dealings towards that highly favored and distinguished people. Such, too, had been their more than ungrateful returns; the goodness of God they consumed upon their lusts, while his forbearance but the more emboldened them in their rebellion. And yet, in view of all this abuse, God addresses them in the language of the most earnest expostulation. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel. How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." We repeat, what strange language for Jehovah to utter towards that ungrateful, rebellious nation!

Let us consider a moment the strong expressions which the prophet, or, rather, God himself, employs in the text, by which we shall be more deeply convinced of God's judgment of the wickedness of the Israelites, and more deeply impressed, not only with his compassion and benevolence, but of the deep yearnings and tenderest workings of his heart. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" Ephraim was the name of

a single tribe, but often, and in this place, stands for the ten tribes of the Hebrew nation. "How shall I deliver thee, Israel?" This was not only a name of equally extensive meaning, but as expressive of peculiar favor and honor. It literally signifies "A prince of God," and was given of the Almighty to Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel of his presence, that is, undoubtedly, the Messiah, in an assumed human form, and prevailed. This language of the text was used, probably, to remind the nation of the Israelites to what special honor and privileges they had been exalted; but how proportionally low they had fallen by their sins, and consequently, how daring were their provocations. And yet, notwithstanding all this, how tenderly the Almighty addresses them: "How shall I give thee up? How shall I deliver thee?" Nor did even this fully express God's displeasure, and their inexpressible deserts. For he still adds, "How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?" These were two of the four cities of the plain which, for the extreme wickedness of their inhabitants, were consumed by fire from heaven. The force of the Divine expostulation is, "How shall I abandon you to utter destruction, as those cities were?" Nor does all this reach the climax of God's commiseration and pity, or, perhaps more properly, the profound depths of his compassion. He still adds, "My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." What language of greater intensity, ex-

pressive of deeper feeling, could be employed? Such language, when applied to a human being, is understood only by the one who utters it. I need not say to some of you, at least, that so intense, so overwhelming are the feelings of the heart, that no words can express them, and utterance can only be given in sighs and groans. But here is the Infinite God, who is immutable to all outward circumstances which can occur in his entire universe, infinitely self-possessed, in the possession of every possible perfection, yet pouring forth the intensest feelings of his infinite heart, in the strange language of even kindling repentance, over the misery and wretchedness of his sinful creatures. "Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. How shall I give thee up? How shall I deliver thee? How can I abandon thee to utter destruction, though most richly deserved, as Admah and Zeboim, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Cities of the Plain?"

But this is not the only instance in which the Almighty expresses himself in similar terms of compassion and earnest expostulation, both in the Old Testament and the New. In the former we read, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of commerce, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and the fools hate knowledge?" "Turn you, at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,

and I will make known my words unto you." "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then hadst thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways and live, for why will ye die?" "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." "O, my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." "Come, now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "O, that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments, always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Such are mere specimens taken from the Old Testament. Let us look a moment into the New. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find

rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. Come, for all things are now ready." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." "For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved."

But where shall I end in quoting similar passages? Invitations, exhortations, admonitions, expostulations, and entreaties, run through the whole New Testament. What, indeed, is the Gospel itself but a system of good news, a Divine arrangement for saving lost sinners? For what else did the Son of God leave the bosom of his Father, and come to our world? take our nature, and die on the cross? He himself has told us that he "came to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to raise sinners of our race to far higher bliss than the first pair enjoyed in Paradise; to make the apostasy, and consequent redemption, the occasion of joys and glories which otherwise would never have

been known; to bring to view Divine attributes which would forever have been concealed, but whose displays constitute the bliss of heaven.

I come now to the principal object of this discourse, which is to wrest from sinners every possible ground of excuse or plea for not at once becoming Christians. We will not, indeed, descend to the more frivolous and trifling excuses which are not seldom made; for no man of any pretension to seriousness or sober reflection ever placed any confidence in or real weight on them. Such, for instance, as that they have no time to attend to the momentous concerns of their souls. This is a plea, indeed, which is often made; but no man of any sober reflection, no man who believes or for one moment thinks that he has a soul to save, or to be lost; who believes that there is a heaven to be gained or a hell to be avoided, ever placed the least confidence in that plea. The man who makes it, *knows* that he is trifling; one sober reflection, one thought of death and of a hereafter, will flash the conviction of its falsehood on the conscience; he does not believe his own statement. Argument with such a man is wholly uncalled for, and he may be left to his own conscience. He knows, if he believes a particle of God's word, that this life is not the principal period of his existence, and that God gave him his being to prepare for *eternity*; and, moreover, that no temporal concerns ought for a moment to interfere with preparation for an eter-

nity of happiness, or the avoidance of endless misery. Such a plea is not entitled to the character of even a delusion; it is prompted wholly from utter dislike to what is necessary, in order to such preparation—in other words, to religion itself. He that makes this plea knows that he is adding another sin to the long catalogue of sins which lie uncanceled against him, and that it is made only to put from his mind the unwelcome subject of religion.

Near akin to this plea is another oftener still made, which is, that “there is time enough yet.” To some, this may seem more reasonable, or partake more of the nature of a delusion than the plea just considered. To the healthy, the strong, and the young, it may appear to possess some force. After all, it is a gross delusion. It is a plea for continued impenitence, and what all who make it know is used, to keep the conscience quiet in the practice of sinful indulgences. No one that makes it believes it to be safe. The daily providences of God, uttered in tones which they cannot but hear, and their import feel, show them, that there is no safety in it, and that it is made only to continue in sin. It carries this conviction on the very face of it. Besides, those who are guilty of it are seldom as bold as Felix of old, openly to avow it. It is a concealed rather than a public plea. Few who indulge it have the presumption and the daring to avow it. Even the secret feeling is one of the highest provocations which can be offered to God, who alone

knows how long the life of any of his creatures will be continued on earth, or when and under what circumstances it will be ended. And surely the proofs of its uncertainty, in regard to all ages and circumstances, are too frequent to pass altogether unheeded. Such constant and often loud admonitions, must sometimes, at least, produce in the minds of the most thoughtless the conviction of the fearful hazard of deferring the momentous concerns of eternity to an uncertain future, even if it were for a single day. An hour's delay has in unnumbered instances proved fatal to the soul.

But there are other pleas which possess a higher character, and though utterly unfounded, are yet urged with deep sincerity. One of this nature is an overwhelming conviction of their sinfulness before God—that their sins, in a word, are too great to permit them even to hope forgiveness. Undoubtedly, multitudes have this painful conviction, and therefore settle down in honest despair. And this would be the case with every child of God, but that he graciously lightens the burden of their guilt, or relieves them of a proper or full sense of it. For, a full perception of the nature of sin, or a full consciousness of their own guilt, in the sight of the infinitely holy God, would sink any soul to utter despair. Perhaps there is no greater source of misery to the finally lost, than a full sense of their sin and guilt. The tortures of conscience, when all restraints are withdrawn, and it is left to its actings, may be, emphatically, “the worm that never dies,”

and its gnawings the fire “which can never be quenched.” “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” But this side the world of woe, where is there occasion of such utter hopelessness? True, no man can measure his own sinfulness and guilt. The Infinite God alone can do this. But can any man measure the compassion and mercy of God? And yet he has said, by an inspired Apostle, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Who can measure the efficacy of the blood of God’s only and equal Son? And yet the same Apostle tells us that he *died* for sinners. And another inspired Apostle tells us that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” This is a groundless plea, an utterly unauthorized—yea, most injurious conception. It is itself a sin of mighty magnitude. It impeaches the truth of God. For it is in direct opposition and contradiction to the whole current of his word. To foreclose this plea, to show in advance the groundlessness of this apprehension or conception, we largely, though very limitedly, quoted God’s own declaration, by his own mouth, by the mouth of his Son, and by his inspired Prophets and Apostles, in the former part of this discourse. Surely, we need not repeat, nor add to them. You can hardly open the Bible, or cast an eye on any page of it, but you find similar declarations, and individual illustrations of their truth, in the renewal and salvation of sinners of the vilest character. No, my hearers, if there are

any such despairing souls in this assembly, on account of their conviction of the greatness of their sins, the only just ground of despair in relation to their salvation is, to despair of doing anything of themselves to merit that salvation, or to lay God under obligations to save them. *This* no man can do. Sin has reduced all our race to equal helplessness, and, in themselves, utter hopelessness. There is but one position for all to take, one course for all to pursue. That position is the lowest possible posture before the cross of Christ, the footstool of sovereign mercy—that course is deep and sincere repentance, and a cheerful, hearty surrender of all to God. This done, and though your sins may be as mountains in point of magnitude, and in numbers as the atoms of the material universe, your salvation is as certain as that God's word is true, or as though you were already a glorified spirit. The belief or suspicion of the contrary is a suggestion of the adversary, addressed to groundless fears,—a real rejection, a virtual contempt of all God's proffered mercy, a charge of the inefficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ. And if you perish, it will be through a rejection of the salvation he so dearly purchased. Emphatically, you will be your own destroyer.

There is another plea, similar to the one just considered, but peculiar in some respects, and especially as proceeding from a distinct class. That class are the aged, and their apprehensions or fears arise from the reflection of a long life of sin, while a

remnant only—and that short at longest—of life remains. Truly, this is an unhappy case; the reflection must be painful. And painful, too, as the remark is, the case of such is well-nigh a forlorn one! Indeed, it is not often that such are brought to repentance. The class of youth furnishes, vastly the larger number of converts. Almost the great body of the Church, in every age, has been, and is, composed of those who came into it when young. And yet, let me say, their numbers are few, compared to the multitudes of the same class who prefer to run the awful risk of deferring the salvation of their souls to a later period of life, though the delay has cost, to countless numbers of them, endless perdition. They never saw the days of which they fondly but vainly dreamed, when they were young; they were cut off in childhood or riper youth; they neglected the calls of mercy then, and in their still early years were forever lost! Yet many were spared, and spared to old age, but to whom the “convenient season” never came, and remained, and remain still, in all their impenitence; and the sad reflection is, most of them will probably die in their sins. Not, indeed, that there is not mercy enough to save them; not that God is not as willing and as ready to save them as to save the youth. God has excepted no class from his proffered salvation. He that repents shall be forgiven; he that believes shall be saved. The conditions are the same to all; and he that complies with them, whatever his years, however numerous and ag-

gravated his sins, the blood of Christ is sufficient to wash them all away.

Yet the doubt of this with the advanced in years, who have not secured their salvation, is no *uncommon doubt*. The despair of such is no uncommon occurrence. It is to those who deeply feel this painful doubt, this subject makes a solemn and earnest appeal. Such have no reason to despair, if they apply to the proper source for the solution of their doubts. God is as willing to receive them as others who have sinned less. Every hindrance to salvation, on his part, has been removed. The atonement of his Son is as sufficient for their salvation as for the salvation of the youngest or most amiable or lovely by nature. The wicked Manasseh, it is believed, though he had grown old in sins and crimes of the deepest dye, was saved, while the amiable young nobleman, it is equally believed, was left to his morality, and perished.

It is true, that there are greater difficulties in the way of aged sinners than that of the young. The Spirit of God operates according to the established laws of the human mind. Sin is necessarily *hardening and blinding*; every transgression of God's law will leave its impress on the soul; and the more numerous one's sins, the more deep that impress, the more difficult to arouse the sensibilities of the soul; the *conscience* becomes less sensitive; it is more difficult for Divine truths to find access to the heart;

habits are less easily, and therefore less likely, to be broken up and overcome.

It is with reference to such that the prophet Jeremiah cries, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are *accustomed* to do evil." It requires, indeed, the most resolute determination, the highest effort of the whole soul, from the very necessity of the case. But there is no occasion for *despair*, no necessity to give up all for lost; the invitations of the Gospel are equally addressed to them as to others. Never too late to put up the plea, if it go up from the heart, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Allow me, in a few closing words, to make an appeal to the dear youths before me, who have not already "chosen that good part which shall never be taken from them." Dear young friends, need you be reminded that every future step in a life of impenitence is hurrying you on to that stage in life when the prospect of your salvation will become less and less promising? that every hour's delay to become Christians is an additional hazard of your immortal souls? that sin and sinful habits will have the same hardening effect on you, that they never fail to have on the impenitent in old age? And this on the slender supposition, that you will reach that age. Not all of you will reach old age. The youngest in this assembly may be the first to be followed to the grave. This were no marvel. And if but *one*, who shall that one be? Ah, which of you,

now in all your thoughtlessness and unpreparedness, may thus soon be hurried into eternity? Heed the solemn admonition of your Maker, with which I will close: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

X.

BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT THE DYING SINNER'S DOOM.

“When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish.”—PROV. 11 : 7.

IT is not possible to conceive of a rational immortal being, whose thoughts are not often busied with the future, and who is not indulging in expectation of some kind in reference to it. Such a capacity, and such an exercise of it, are essential to a human soul. This constitutes the vast difference between man and all created beings *below him*. This principle in human nature we see illustrated through the whole course of every man's life. He is ever the subject of desires or fears—constantly indulging expectations, pleasing or otherwise. These expectations may be less or more limited, as to the period in which they are to be realized, and be promoted by various objects, or ends of pursuit; while with every man, and at every moment of his conscious existence, there is a supreme, all-governing one. With some, the supreme good and all-governing object is the acquisition of wealth; with others, honors; with a third class, worldly pleasures, in some of their thousand

forms ; all of which, of course, are limited to this life. The object *desired* may, indeed, lie beyond the period of our present existence ; but at the termination of this, that object will be *realized*, or utter and endless *disappointment* ensue. This latter alternative, the pen of inspiration has written against every one whom death overtakes in his impenitence.

Let me have the attention of all, whose hopes for the future have not the warrant of God's truth, while I state some, at least, of the expectations of such, in regard to this all-important subject.

1. I may remark, that the wicked, in the absence of the visible means of their death, never view that event so near at hand as to awaken alarm, or demand immediate preparation to meet it. Indeed, it is commonly, if not universally true of such, that when the infallible symptoms of its near approach are thick upon them, they are either insensible, or dreaming of recovery, until utter despair settles on the soul.

That there is hope of the soul while there is the life of the body, is a remark, however common with men, for which God's word furnishes no warrant, but much to refute it. Indeed, there is no warrant for a moment's delay, in the case of any sinner. "I have called, and ye refused," may any moment forever settle the sinner's doom.

Death is viewed by every sinner who still continues in his sins, as at too remote a distance to awaken alarm, or call for instant preparation. Were this true

only of the youth in all the bloom of health, or the man in all his vigor and strength, this thought might, perhaps, lose something of its weight; although who sees aught but awful presumption, even in such? For whose life is secure any moment? But the presumption is not peculiar to such. Indeed, of the former class, the great body of Christians has in every age been composed. But the sinner far down the vale of years is as unapprehensive as the youth; yea, and probably more so. To him, even, there is time enough yet. And thus he feels, till he finds the cold hand of death pressing hard upon him! O, when he dies, how has his expectation forever perished! How the recollection of his misspent years and awful presumption, that death was always viewed by him at a distance, and his fearful forebodings of the future mingle together, to fill his soul with anguish and horror! Ah, is there one here with such a sad prospect before him, let me fall down, as at your feet, and beseech you to avert that doom by instant repentance. Nor is there an impenitent sinner here, whatever his age, or flattering prospects for years to come, to whom the same warning and entreating voice is not appropriately addressed. This is one of the most common and fatal delusions which all sinners cherish. But death will banish it, and the expectation to which it gives rise shall perish.

2. Another but similar delusion, and not less fatal, is, that coming opportunities will be more favorable

than present ones, or the individual himself will be in a more fit state to attend to this great concern. We read, indeed, of but one who avowed this as the reason for deferring this important subject to a future time; and to that man, if the account which has been given of him be true, that time never came. But men may act on that false notion, without avowing it. Every delaying sinner, if a reflecting one, does act on it, although every serious reflection should correct it. There can be no question that this is the secret reason with every impenitent person present, why he has remained and still remains impenitent and unconcerned. The work of saving the soul is looked upon as a work to which the sinner must be compelled; that it is the last resort of a soul driven or cut off from all other resources, or disqualified for all other employments; and having experienced the vanity of earthly pursuits, either through satiety or disappointments, tired of the bustle, or wearied of the cares of life, they flatter themselves that they will be ready to let go their grasp on the world, or the infirmities of age will relax it; they will then feel the importance of providing a substitute for these things, will feel less reluctance to repent, and be more susceptible of serious and tender impressions. The facts, of which they vainly think they shall feel the full force, that they *cannot* live much longer, that death is rapidly hastening on, that eternity, with all its solemn and awful realities, is near, will attract all

their thoughts, and make repentance comparatively easy. Ah! what views such have of the great end of their existence—for what purpose God gave them their being, and placed them on this earth—and has made such an amazing sacrifice, the sacrifice of his own Son, to make provision for their salvation! But none of these expectations will they ever realize. We do not say that none of this description will ever be saved; but we do say that none of these things will ever make repentance easier. O, no; it will increase its difficulties and its agonies a thousandfold. This is one of the artifices of the adversary to destroy the souls of men. Not the word of God only, but experience and observation show such expectations to be utterly groundless and delusive. Think how many are suddenly sent into eternity by a blow! And a still greater number, probably, are—from the moment they are seized with fatal sickness—racked with pains, which disqualify for serious, fixed thought, or which deprive of reason!

Moreover, who does not know that repentance deferred serves only to harden the heart, to increase the relish for sin, and render, of course, the sinner the more averse to repent of and abandon it?—a work never easy, under the most favorable circumstances, and even in the youngest sinner. And to all these questions, which furnish their own answers, we add, what is reasonably to be expected from continued indifference to the constantly repeated calls of mercy,

the often loud admonitions of Providence, continued resistance of the Holy Spirit, and persevering rejection of Christ and his salvation? Is there not peculiar fearfulness in such multiplied provocations? such abuse of God's forbearance—such insults to his mercy? Surely, expectations of more favorable opportunities than the present must perish. Scarcely is a sinner, under such circumstances, brought to his death-bed, who does not, if not bereaved of reason, add his dying testimony to the folly as well as sin of deferred repentance, under the vain expectation of a future more favorable opportunity of securing his salvation.

3. Sinners who thus trifle with their immortal interests, expect to entertain the same flattering and consoling views of themselves, and be supported by them, in their dying hour, that they entertain while that event is viewed at a distance. It is no easy matter for the most considerate and reflecting Christian, whose daily conversation is in heaven, so to familiarize himself with the scenes of the dying hour, as to meet it without surprise, and without experiencing much which will be new and unexpected, oft-times much to overwhelm him. And surely no sinner ever anticipated the strange views and feelings with which he will come to that trying hour. These he chooses to keep out of sight as long as possible. Self-flattery, if we believe God's word, is characteristic of the sinner. "The transgression of the wicked, saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before

his eyes; for he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." They do not pretend that they have not broken God's holy law. They admit that they have sinned in various ways. But in ways equally various and satisfactory to themselves, they can palliate their sins.

One view especially will the sinner take in the dying hour which he never had before,—that will be a look into his own heart. That deep, dark sink of depravity will be thrown open to his clearest view. Such a view as will strip it of all its disguises—expose all its principles of action in all his life. He will there see and feel that all his supposed benevolence was unmixed selfishness; that his sacrifices for what he had ascribed to the interest of morality and religion, were extorted by the demands of natural conscience—the fear of wrath—the hope of profit—the gratification of a kindly disposition—or, at best, the promptings of a natural sympathy; that not an act of his life was the fruit of a sincere love of God—not one originated in faith in Christ—not a throb of genuine repentance ever beat in his heart, nor a tear of godly sorrow ever fell from his eyes. Such is the heart in its unsanctified state. Such is every one who has not been born again. And such will be their own conviction and judgment of it, and of themselves. All the expectation they had previously indulged will perish in death. Hence,

4. The wicked expect to regard the scenes of the

dying hour, when that comes, with much of the indifference with which they look forward to them while viewed at a distance. All their ideas on that subject are vague and indefinite. They do not make it matter of serious inquiry. What must be the condition of one in that hour, who is deeply conscious of no interest in Christ—no Divine hand to support—no solid hope of eternal life? At a distance, they view death as a trifle. For a mere trifle multitudes throw life away. In prospect, death has no terrors. They expect none when it comes. But the hand of death will banish these expectations. It is the hour, too, into which is crowded one's whole history. The past seems all present, while the future presents its awful realities as never before. Expectations, once so fondly cherished, all vanish, to give place to tormenting forebodings. Indifference yields to the most agonizing intensity of thought and feeling. Nothing—no, nothing to support hope from all the past. Nothing to kindle it from the future. Christ is the only foundation of solid, unshaken hope; and faith alone plants the soul on that foundation. But they have not believed in Christ; and how can they hope? They have trusted to themselves that they were righteous; and what title have they to that which another has purchased, while the very condition by which that title is conveyed, is not complied with? They had depended on their own nerves to encounter that last enemy, and look unappalled at the opening scenes of a near eternity.

But how does their strength become perfect weakness in the last conflict? Ah, life itself had been a dream. But now they awake. How are these expectations swept away as with a whirlwind. So reads this sacred book: "Their destruction cometh as a whirlwind. They have sown the wind: they shall reap the whirlwind. Behold the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind. It shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked."

Once more. The confidence of sinners in their false refuges shall perish when they die.

It is not easy, nor is it common, for sinners to live under the clear light of the Gospel and habitually listen to its sounds, and not have something which they call religion, and on which to place their hopes for the future. No reflecting person can be placed in such circumstances, without seasons of serious thoughtfulness. And it is not improbable that *every sinner* whose attention can be had to the solemn truths of God's word in his house, is sometimes made deeply and pungently to feel the danger of his condition. With beings who ever think of the immortality of their existence, it is difficult to believe otherwise, however little they ordinarily think of their eternal destiny.

But while such eagerly seize any opportunity which presents, to wipe off the serious impressions which may have been made on their consciences under the preaching of God's word, there are others of a more habitual

seriousness and thoughtfulness, who must have something on which they can, at all times, rest a hope of salvation—some plausible scheme as a substitute for that of the Gospel: they cannot be satisfied with notions which are altogether vague and indefinite. This is the origin of those false schemes and “refuges of lies” which the ingenuity of men has invented. Hence, that scheme which makes God a Being of such indiscriminate mercy, wholly overlooking his justice, that he will suffer *none* eternally to perish, but will save *all*.

Another such scheme, but closely allied to that just stated, is, that sin is not so great an evil as to require the incarnate Son of God to die to make an atonement for it; but that the martyrdom of a mere man for the purpose of merely recommending and enforcing the truth, is all-sufficient.

A third scheme is, that the ills and sufferings of the present life is an ample punishment for the sins which men here commit, notwithstanding inspired truth tells us that the wicked, even those who condemn the Most High, are not in trouble as other men, and even as the righteous are.

Another scheme is, that there is a place in the other world where sinners will be sent for a season to be purified, and then be admitted to heaven.

These, and like false schemes, are embraced by multitudes, and on them they place their hope of eternal life. These are they, who, in the language of inspira-

tion, "have made lies their refuge, and under falsehood have hid themselves." But it is added: "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow their hiding-place." O, how will the expectations of all such as cling to these false grounds of hope, till death cuts them off, eternally perish! Hear the fearful declarations of Jehovah: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee." "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." "The wicked shall be turned into hell: they shall be destroyed, and that without remedy." "They shall eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices." "The wicked are reserved to the day of destruction." "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

Who in the hearing of these awful declarations can doubt the truth of my text, "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish?" Nor is the application of it restricted to any particular class of sinners; it embraces all the impenitent.

And now, what improvement shall be made of this most fearful subject? Or has it no bearing on any of us? Are there none here who are quieting themselves with those vain expectations, which, if not previously

relinquished, shall perish in the trying hour of death? Are not some of you at ease in your sins, under the belief that your death is a remote event? O, how often do you see that presumption rebuked! And where is *your* security against what has so often occurred to others? In what is it found? Health does not furnish it; youth does not furnish it; exemption from visible dangers does not furnish it. Absolute uncertainty attends on every step; multitudes take the last, ere they are aware of it.

Are you expecting opportunities more favorable than you now enjoy for securing salvation? If so, what are they? We have been viewing the sinner in a variety of states, and the more common conditions in which they come to their death. Sure I am, you would not select either of them, as more favorable to prepare to meet your final Judge, than that in which you now are. Were you permitted to choose the circumstances in which, as *impenitent* sinners, you would come to that hour, what would you have them be, as preferable to those in which you are now placed? Would you have them more alarming? This were to choose an *impossibility*. It were to choose against your very strongest inclination; for you are fixed against being alarmed. Moreover, a voice from heaven—a messenger from the dead, could not utter language more solemnly impressive than the word of God proclaims. And if cries for mercy would be louder on the death-bed than now in health, will the God of

mercy be more ready to hear them, when all *His* calls through your whole life have been unheeded? In a word, are any of you expecting to be sustained in your last hour by any of those pleas or refuges by which you now quiet your consciences? Can you find a warrant for this in the word of God? And what if some, yea, multitudes, have come to their dying hour in all their stupidity, in all their vain expectations, and been sustained to the last moment by a false hope, has not God said, that moment past, and all these expectations and hopes “shall perish”—yea, be “driven away as by a whirlwind?” And would any of you thus leave the world? Is sin so supremely pleasing now, that you are willing to risk its final consequences? Take care, if this be *now* your disposition, lest *that shall* be your wretched doom! And why run hazards and incur perils which will become more and more imminent and multiplied, every moment that repentance is deferred? That essential work, need, I assure you, will not become more easy the longer it is delayed. Nor will the apprehensions which the dying hour may awaken, or even the opening scenes of an awful eternity produce, make you more willing to engage in it. They would fill with remorse and drive to despair, rather than provoke to godly repentance.

Let me then, earnestly and affectionately, beseech every sinner here, to defer repentance no longer. Infinitely too precious is the immortal soul—too near and too solemn the realities of eternity, to hazard its

salvation another hour. Now God is bending, as it were, from his throne of mercy, with the kindest invitations and entreaties. His voice is, "Why will you die?" "O, that ye would hearken unto me! O, that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end." The Saviour, too, adds his entreaties: "Come unto me." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come—come and take of the water of life freely." Listen again, ye dying sinners: "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

XI.

MOTIVES TO EARLY PIETY.

“Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.”—TITUS 2 : 6.

THE Christian religion is adapted and addresses itself to all the relations, ages, and conditions of mankind. It overlooks none of them, either as it regards their present or future state of existence. Such is the connection, however, between those states, that the one is preparatory to the other. Nor does it leave any of the duties which are appropriate to those relations, ages, and conditions, to be inferred from mere general or natural principles, or deductions of reason; but, eminently practical in its character, it explicitly states and solemnly enforces them. No small portion of God's inspired word is taken up in this department of the Christian system. It entered largely into the teachings of Christ, its Divine Author, while the Apostles who wrote devoted whole chapters to it. Of this character is the chapter from which the text is taken, and indeed the greater part of the whole Epistle. To state them all, would be to transcribe the Epistle itself. In this discourse, however, we are con-

cerned exclusively with a single class. "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded." And I scarcely need say, that there is not a more important class embraced in the human family, nor one to which a higher responsibility is attached. Much, very much, depends on their early training, even the first stages of youth and childhood. But whatever that may have been, though it will exert an influence over all after-life, yet they have now reached an age when they are addressed by motives peculiar to their age and standing, and unless insensible to all moral obligations, will feel a responsibility never felt by them before. They form the grand connecting link, if I may so term it, between the two great portions of the human family, the rapidly disappearing, and no less rapidly advancing generation. It is a transition state from the one to the other—a stage in life when the thoughtless unconcern and levities of the one are exchanged for more serious aims and graver duties—in a word, when the child is laid aside for the man. The essential preparation for this is expressed by a single word in the text,—that of sober-mindedness: "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded."

The text suggests two points for our consideration:

I. What is here implied in being *sober-minded*?

II. State the *reasons* on which the exhortation is formed.

I. The original word, which in the text is translated "sober-minded," is one of extensive meaning, and of

various applications as used in the New Testament. As it has reference to the mind, and literally means to be of *sound mind*, it will, of course, admit of various applications, as the mind is *properly* exercised in regard to any subject. Hence, it is rendered, "in his right mind;" that is, restored to the full possession and exercise of his reason, with reference to the man out of whom the Saviour cast a legion of foul spirits or devils. "To think soberly;" "Accordingly as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith;" "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." (Paul to the Corinthians.) Thus, also, Peter: "Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer." Elsewhere it is rendered, literally, "to be of sound mind," where it is connected with the love of God.

These examples show, not merely the exercise of the faculty of reason, but a morally proper state of the mind, including all its faculties,—the intellectual and the moral. It implies the conquest of all sinful passions and appetites. In a word, a proper self-government, under the controlling influence of religion. It is at the period of life when such an influence is eminently needed. There are special reasons, therefore, why that class of the human family should be singled out and made the object of the direct attention of inspiration, and of special exhortation and warning. It is then that the passions and appetites are the strongest, and require peculiar restraints. The ordeal is a

severe one to those who pass through that age; the danger imminent to all the most important interests both of time and eternity.

But not to anticipate what may come more properly under the next general topic of this discourse, I only add here, that sober-mindedness, or “to be of sound mind,” is everywhere in the Scriptures associated with, or rather, is the foundation of all the virtues and excellences of a moral and religious character—as, to be grave, honest, temperate; sound in faith, in charity, in patience, in doctrine; showing uncorruptness or purity in heart and life; gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. All these qualities and excellences stand in the closest connection with the text.

As you have seen also in the passages just quoted, it is to be what St. Paul, in the same connection, exhorted his young Christian friend, to whom he addressed this epistle, “his own son in the faith,” Titus, to be, “a pattern of good works.” I need not say, it is all that is denoted by being a *true Christian*. Or, as another Apostle expresses it, when addressing the same class, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” We were

II. To state the reasons on which the exhortation

in the text is founded,—“Young men exhort to be sober-minded.”

1. The first reason which I assign is, that it is the most critical period of human life; the most critical stage of one's earthly existence. It is the period, as already hinted, when the natural, human passions are the strongest; a period when, under such strong impulses, it becomes, with multitudes at least, first matter of debate with themselves, and then of wrong decision, whether they shall not throw off the restraints under which they have been placed in their childhood, even those restraints which have been imposed by a religious and pious education. The first breathings of freedom are peculiarly animating and exciting. And they readily argue themselves into the belief, that there is something *manly* in throwing off the restraints of parental authority—in forgetting, as far as possible, the instructions of a pious father, and even the prayers of a pious mother. All this, with multitudes at least, where the previous training of their childhood, their religious education, has not been accompanied with the saving influences of God's Spirit. How often we see this in almost, if not quite, every community: the most salutary restraints thrown off; the most pious instructions forgotten or disregarded; the prayers taught in childhood omitted, and none substituted in place of them. God's word laid aside; his name and his sacred day, profaned; his house of prayer, but occasionally, perhaps very seldom, or never

visited. The practice of all these things requires no special training, although unhappily in many a family all these things are taught, if not by precept, by example, and by numerous examples all around them, of those who, alas! have made the trial, and it is to be feared, in most instances, made shipwreck of their souls! These things are the inevitable consequences of the strong impulses of the natural heart of every one left to their promptings. But the hazard is great, the danger imminent, at the period referred to, or the class addressed in the text, and furnishes a powerful reason for the Apostle's exhortation contained in it.

We may, in this connection, remark, that at that period of life, many new objects of attraction present themselves; new pursuits open up before them, to solicit their choice; new temptations surround them, whose power, of course, is proportioned to the ardor of their feelings. And nothing but firmly established religious principles will prompt to a right or safe direction, or retain one in that direction. Without these, man may, indeed, prosper in worldly things, and even in opposition to these, but such prosperity will ultimately prove no blessing. Read the 73d Psalm, to know the sad result. But we must dismiss this topic, and remark:

2. A powerful reason to enforce the exhortation in the text, is found in the responsibility resting on young men, with reference to the graver duties, both

civil and ecclesiastical, which are soon to be devolved upon them. On no class of our race does such a weight of responsibility rest, except on those who now discharge those duties, but who are soon to give place to their successors. They are just stepping into the places, so soon to be vacated by those who now occupy them. They are soon to fill the offices of civil government, from the highest to the lowest. And although religion may be no test, or the possession of true piety not an indispensable qualification for office, yet, without the pervading influence which Christianity sanctions or demands, no government can prove a lasting benefit. Its proper rights will neither be exercised nor enjoyed.

But this is not the only important department of active life, into which young men are just being introduced. And although a vast majority of them decline the honor and the privilege, yet, of their number, small as the minority of that class may be, are those who are to be the ministers of the Gospel, and constitute at least a portion of the membership of the Church. It is God's own appointment, "by the foolishness of preaching" (foolishness in the estimation of multitudes), "but the wisdom of God, to save them that believe."

This appointment has been observed ever since there has been a Gospel to be preached and believed, and will be, till this world has been converted to God, and all the subjects of his saving grace received to heaven.

There must, then, and there will be, preachers of that Gospel; and the places of those who now preach it must and will, on their vacating them, be filled from the class of young men. But though few, comparatively, will fill those offices in the civil government or in the Church, yet there is scarcely a less weight of responsibility resting upon them in another point of view. They are to give tone and character to society in general. Fidelity in the discharge of the various social duties is as important as official fidelity; the latter is fruitless where the former is wanting. No greater support can be given, either to civil government or the Christian ministry, than, in the *proper* state of society, the faithful discharge of all incumbent duties.

Here is a field which all may occupy and cultivate, male and female; and none are under greater, if even as great obligations, to properly occupy and cultivate it, as that class who must, necessarily, soon enter upon it.

What the state of society shall be; what, under her Great Head, the state of the Church shall be in its ministerial or more private relationships, eminently depends on the class of young men. They have it in the sphere of their influence to revolutionize, if not physically yet morally, the character of society, and of putting a most happy and commanding aspect on the very Church of Christ. There might be dens of vice and sinks of pollution patronized by older ones in iniquity;

but the young men could break them all up; they could close every avenue and bar every gate, which, in the significant and emphatic language of inspiration, "is the way to hell, going down to the chamber of (the second) death." They need no other authority, no other laws, no other weapons, than this sacred Book affords and enjoins; need no other influence than the spirit which the Gospel breathes, the course of life God's word prescribes.

Who, then, can measure or estimate the solemn responsibility which rests upon that class of the human family? It cannot be measured; it cannot be computed. It is as weighty as all the consequences which flow from it—that is, from properly regarding or from disregarding that responsibility; and these consequences are not limited to time, but extend themselves into eternity. They will be seen and felt in being the means of souls saved or of souls lost. Such is the solemn responsibility which rests on every young man—a responsibility which he cannot throw off.

3. One other reason only, to enforce the exhortation stated in the text: "Young men exhort to be sober-minded;" in other words, as we have seen the term to mean, to become Christians, that reason is, that though death comes to all classes, and all ages, from infancy to extreme old age, he comes to the class addressed in the text under peculiarly unfavorable circumstances. Unless previously pious, it finds them

in a condition and under influences most unpropitious, most unfavorable for securing their salvation. While from their very condition, as we have already described it—and we need not restate it—they are laying plans for their future course; or else, in the ardor of their feelings, already pursuing what only serves to divert their attention from serious things; and they, of all others, as a class, are indulging the strongest expectations of many years to come.

Do we do injustice to that class, as a distinct class, when we express the belief that their condition is peculiarly hazardous, and that, generally speaking, there is less ground to hope their conversion than either in earlier or even in later life? What do *facts* teach? Look through the churches generally, and how few of that class are members! There are, indeed, many pleasing exceptions; many young men of promise to take the place of their fathers when removed from the world; not a few who promise far greater usefulness in the Church than multitudes who entered it before them have put forth.

But their numbers must be vastly multiplied before the world's conversion. The heat and burden of the day will not belong to those who, late in life, enter the Lord's vineyard. But we speak comparatively, the number of such is small, Christendom over. But recurring to the thought, which was above introduced, death comes as often, however unexpectedly, and often as suddenly, to them as to others. Not unfrequently,

indeed, he seems to select out such, as his victims, hurling his fatal darts rather at them than at others. To bring the subject home to ourselves. See the truth of this statement fearfully sustained in his desolating march through this city the past season.* Look carefully over the dark roll which contains the names and the ages of those whom he suddenly hurried to their graves. What a vast proportion of them were youths—were young men! Some just set out in active life, and others preparing for its employments. The sad exclamation was common, as one after another in rapid succession, and even in groups, were smitten with the devouring pestilence, and hurriedly sent to their last, long home.

How many young men are of the number! This was the exclamation of all! As I have stood by the dying beds of some of them, and seen the violence with which their disease was hastening them to life's last moment, and witnessed their unconscious struggles with the king of terrors, and reflected, that if not previously prepared to meet God, their final Judge, in peace, they must enter his awful presence in all their sins, O, how have my thoughts been directed to you, my young friends, some of whom then were, and are still I fear, all without God and without hope in the world! How often has the duty forced itself upon me, if spared myself, of *especially* addressing this impor-

* The summer and autumn of 1854, when the city of Savannah was visited by yellow fever.

tant part of my charge on the momentous interest of their eternity! The opportunity has been granted me, and with all the faithfulness, earnestness, and affection I would address you, did I know it were my last to speak, and your last to hear, I now call upon you to secure your eternal salvation. I would merge every other motive, your temporal usefulness, and temporal happiness, in this one,—your eternal salvation. This, indeed, embraces all others. Nothing that is foreign from this all-important work—nothing which is not included in this, is worth living for. Without this, existence were no blessing—were a curse, an infinite curse—an eternal curse. With this, all that can ennoble, and dignify, and exalt, in a world of endless bliss, and ever-increasing glory, will be your portion.

What had been your prospects—what your state, had you been in the place of the dying and the dead? And I persuade myself that you, who may have witnessed similar scenes, or received the intelligence from other sources, have had similar thoughts, and, perhaps, made the like inquiry. And was it a transient thought? was it a momentary inquiry? Has this been the only effect produced? Was the great end, or purpose of God, in thus coming so near to you, and though sparing you, took from you so many of your neighbors, your familiar acquaintances, and even some of your intimate associates, your daily companions—has, I ask, a momentary seriousness been the

only effect produced on your minds? Are not those scenes which, as they were passing, you felt to be full of solemn warning to you, equally so, as you recall them? Is not their present condition in eternity, whatever that may be, as solemnly admonitory, as affectingly impressive, as when you first, in thought, followed their departing spirits into the world of spirits? Not all the calls, and warnings, and entreaties, which come to us, even from human beings, are limited to this world. It is not from the death-bed they utter their last. They utter them from the eternal world to which their immortal spirits have gone. They send them forth from the bar of the great Judge, and before which the soul as it leaves the body is arraigned, and where they have already stood—they come from their unchangeably fixed abodes, whether of bliss or woe. And if the latter, their language to you, if you are yet in your sins, is that of the rich man in hell, to Abraham,—that he would send Lazarus to his father's house, to his five surviving brethren, to testify unto them, that they come not to the same place of torment. Calls from the one place or from the other will continue to come from the spirits of departed friends, till we receive the call to follow them. I know of no calls from human beings as solemn, as affecting as these. If there is anything, save the direct influence of the omnipotent Spirit, if anything within the whole circle of means, equally solemn and affecting, or which conveys louder calls to

the impenitent, to prepare for the eternity to which they are hastening, for the solemnities of the judgment in which they must soon be concerned, or the retributions of eternity which they must soon realize, I know not from what quarter they can come. And all these are addressed to you, "young men," and to you, in louder tones than to any other class of my hearers, especially in the view of the past. Will you turn a deaf ear to them? Shall they be uttered in vain? What would you not do for your friends, your dearest relatives; what, that they now need to relieve from their troubles, and add to their comfort, so far as you could do it? What sacrifices would you not make? And will you not spare them the pain, the indescribable anguish, of leaving to them no hope for you when your spirits are summoned into the world of spirits? Would you add to the overwhelming sorrow of their temporal loss in your death, the far-keener anguish of no well-grounded assurance or hope against your own eternal loss.

However long you may be spared, and though you should survive all your now pious friends, yet whenever death comes to you, he will tear asunder many strong and tender ties—many a heart will be made to bleed. But O spare them from the bitter pangs of an impenitent death-bed! Leave them the consolation—the richest, the only consolation you can leave them—that *their* loss is *your* eternal gain! This, with God's blessing, you can do; and that blessing He is ready to bestow, and only waits for you to receive it. He has

waited thus from your childhood. Will you still weary his patience, till, alas! his patience is wearied out; till his mercy, now so freely proffered, is, in his own fearful language, "clean gone forever?" If not, then repent to-day—repent now. An hour, a moment, is too much to lose in all the uncertainty of life—in the fearful danger of exhausting Divine forbearance—in the absolute certainty of augmenting your guilt, and, if you die impenitent, of a more weighty condemnation! If delayed to this hour, begin the all-important work to-day. Let this day witness to its commencement—in avoiding every violation of it—in perusing God's sacred word—in bowing before his mercy-seat—in penitence sincere—in submission entire. Let this day bear testimony to the beginning of a work which shall be consummated when your immortal spirits pass from earth to heaven!

XII.

THE GLORY OF GOD MANIFESTED TO THE INHABITANTS OF HEAVEN

BY THE PLAN OF HUMAN SALVATION.

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”—
EPHESIANS 3 : 10.

THE Divine glory is the highest motive by which an intelligent being can be influenced. It is the only one which is worthy of God himself. By this he has been governed in all his purposes and works: this moved him to create the world. For his pleasure all things are and were created. His great, supreme object, in all his plans and operations, is to manifest himself, to display his perfections to the view of his rational creation.

Among the various ways by which he has chosen thus to manifest himself, stands first and chief the work of man's redemption: “To the intent, that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” By “principalities and powers in heavenly places,” are

undoubtedly to be understood the different ranks or orders of angels in heaven; and by the "manifold wisdom of God," the various ways in which he displays his wisdom—in other words, the whole assemblage of his perfections. God, in the manifestation of himself, is the Great Luminary of the moral universe, and the chief glory of heaven. Whatever brings *Him* to view must be the source of the highest joy to all who bear his moral image.

My object in this discourse is to present for our contemplation some of the Divine perfections, as exhibited in the salvation of men. And

1. The love of God, or more particularly, his love as directed towards *sinner*s. Love is, indeed, his *nature*; and in that abstract sense, it is not properly to be classed among his *attributes*. It is the foundation of them all. All his attributes are only different modifications of his *love*. But love, when directed towards objects which deserve only *displeasure and wrath*, is, at least, a peculiar feeling, or modification of love. It exists only in the heart of God and those to whom he imparts it.

"Love your enemies," is the hardest lesson for even Christians to learn and practise. And nothing short of omnipotent grace could cause them to do it. But the highest degree of it ever reached by any Christian in his present state of imperfection, bears indeed but a faint resemblance to the love of Him, "who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." On this most extraordinary fact, Paul thus speaks: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This peculiar attribute in the Divine nature, therefore, the foundation, the great moving principle in the work of redemption, may well be a subject of distinct and adoring contemplation, in the manifestation which God makes of himself by the Church. Without this, there had been *no Church*; *no redemption* of a soul of our fallen race.

2. The infinite wisdom of God is exhibited in this work. For although the phrase, "manifold wisdom of God," as we have defined it, embraces all the attributes of God which are brought to view "by the Church," yet it may be regarded as a distant attribute of the Divine mind. "Wisdom is the choice of the best means to accomplish the best end." In the present case, that end was the salvation of sinners under sentence of eternal death. Here were difficulties to be removed, infinitely beyond our highest conceptions of any feasible plan of effecting their removal, until disclosed by the plan which God adopted. God is perfectly holy, and must therefore perfectly hate sin. The threatening had gone forth, "The soul that sinneth,

shall die." How then could the sinner live? God could not call his omnipotence to his aid, and by a sovereign act make the sinner holy, and thus happy. His character as a moral Governor forbade this. His truth was involved. Ah, what but Infinite Wisdom could have devised a plan to reconcile justice and mercy, so that the one might be maintained, and maintained to the adoring admiration of the whole intelligent universe, and the other exercised to the eternal salvation of the sinner? But God's plan has completely reconciled these conflicting attributes. This has been done by the only begotten Son of God taking our nature into union with his divine, and in it "dying, the just for the unjust." What like this could show God's regard for his justice and truth? And where now is the bar to the consistent exercise of his mercy towards the sinner? The death of Christ redeems him. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Thus Paul: "Much more, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Hence

3. Only by the plan which God has devised could his mercy have been manifested or known; certainly, one of the brightest of his attributes. Principalities and powers in heaven had probably been forever without the knowledge of it, unless God had interposed in behalf of fallen angels, or some other fallen race.

But he has not stopped at the mere proclamation of the plan, in making it consistent for him to make the offer of eternal life. Not one of our race would have been saved had that been all. But when exercised in the actual salvation of the sinner, how is this attribute magnified! But

4. This requires the display of *other* Divine attributes, especially the power of God. For the display of this attribute, as well as of his wisdom, we are usually pointed, it is true, to the works of creation; and they do, indeed, afford demonstrations of God's omnipotence and wisdom. But expressing ourselves, after the manner of men, there is a higher energy put forth in the regeneration of a sinner, in turning the whole current of his affections, than in his first creation, or the creation of the material universe. It is, indeed, a creation—a moral creation—but it is not the less a creation because moral. And so is it denominated in the Scriptures: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” “Created anew in Christ Jesus.” The fact that it is both moral and voluntary, in such a being as the sinner is, only renders the change produced a still more striking exhibition of Divine power. For he is willing, only as he is made willing by that power. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” This was the language of God, the Father, to his Son, and contains the only certainty that he “should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” Listen to the following language, as ex-

pressing the energy required in effecting the all-essential change, and of preparing the soul for heavenly glory. "That ye may know the exceeding greatness of his power to usward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power." What more remarkable and striking instance of this "mighty power of God, the exceeding greatness of his power," has ever been known, than was manifested in the conversion of a Saul of Tarsus!

But there have been like Sauls in every age subdued by the omnipotent grace of God. Nor is less required, in the new creation of any sinner. The like resistance to the offer of eternal life is found in the heart of every impenitent sinner. Why is it that so many *amiable sinners*, and even *lovely youths*, are found, in every congregation, refusing the offer of eternal life, which is pressed on their acceptance from Sabbath to Sabbath, multitudes of whom have remained in all that amiability and loveliness through life, and perished? And when such are brought to repentance, we hear *them*, not less than when the *sturdiest sinner* is subdued, ascribing their change to the same omnipotent grace of God.

And what seems still stranger, nothing short of the same Almighty power is required to preserve the true convert, and every Christian, from *failing* of eternal life. To this, their final perseverance is expressly ascribed: "Who are kept by the power of God unto salvation." What but God's powerful arm has pre-

served the dear-bought Church of Christ from utter extinction?

Ever since her existence began, she has had to contend against vigilant and powerful enemies, and often been the object of the most violent attacks from the combined forces of two worlds: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Not more, nor more astonishing miracles were ever wrought, nor more wonderful displays of Omnipotence ever witnessed, than in behalf of the Church. Indeed, it was only for her the most stupendous miracles were ever wrought, or rather, to display His own perfections by means of the Church, through her, as a mirror, to reflect His own glory to the view of "principalities and powers in heavenly places." But

Again. And without descending to farther particulars, all else may be comprised in the general terms, that "by the Church, God shows that all the glory in the sinner's salvation is exclusively his own." To this conclusion we are driven, whatever view we take of it. If we look for its *origin*, we see his glory there; we see it in every purpose, every design; in the plan adopted, and in every step of its progress; in the gift of his only begotten Son; that Son's voluntary sacrifice of himself; in all he did and all he suffered; in the descent and operations of the Holy Spirit; in the conviction, conversion, sanctification, and perseverance of

the renewed sinner—the existence, protection, and defence of the Church. All was intended to bring his own glorious character to view, to make “known his manifold wisdom.” That a single purpose of mercy was entertained towards our race, or was proclaimed to our world and carried into effect; that a Church was gathered and still exists, and will yet triumph in all the earth, and be raised at length to a state of endless glory in heaven;—all, all was for his own glory, and will constitute all *her* glory. Hence, he will save all, whose salvation will contribute to this great end: just those individuals, and under just those circumstances, which will most contribute to that end; and only leave those to go on in sin, their own chosen way, to perish, whose wrath shall praise him: “For the wrath of man shall praise God; the remainder of wrath he will restrain.”

Nothing is clearer, from all God does, than that he is a *Sovereign*—not, indeed, what that term often is made to denote among men, with which we associate the character of an *arbitrary ruler*, a tyrant;—infinitely far from this is God as a *Sovereign*. His sovereignty is directed by infinite wisdom and perfect holiness. With God is no partiality, no respect of persons. Paul has expressed it in close connection with our text: acting “according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Here it is implied that he always acts from the best of reasons:

“after the counsel of his own will.” His own infinite perfections are his counsellors; that is, he acts agreeably to the united dictates of all his perfections, without assigning his reasons to his creatures.

This is seen in all his works of creation; in making this world as he has and not otherwise—in making us men and not angels. Nor seen less in his providences, in arranging all the circumstances of his creatures, and directing all events that occur. In all these, who has been his counsellor, out of himself? Still more manifest, if possible, is the exercise of his sovereignty in relation to his Church. It is concerned in every instance of conversion, and even conviction; for this is the work of his Spirit, the sovereignty of whose operations is expressed by the “wind which bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” We often see this strikingly manifested in the selection of the subjects of his saving operations; in the one taken, and the other left. We cannot ascribe it to external circumstances and advantages. Not all of the same advantages become converts. Or, to render the case still more striking, and to us, unaccountable, but which often occurs, those who have enjoyed few external advantages, have become converts and devoted Christians, while others, blessed with every privilege, Christian education, pious parentage, and religious advantages, have remained careless and unconcerned.

We cannot even ascribe it to difference of natural disposition. For converts are not always made from the class of the most amiable and naturally lovely. Such are often passed by, and the most abandoned sometimes brought into the kingdom of Christ. Witness the amiable young ruler, as proof in the one case, and the abandoned prodigal son in the other. Who can assign the reasons of this distinction? Nor is the sovereignty of God less manifest in the subsequent course of the child of God, or the dispensations of Divine Providence towards him. What sad reverses, not seldom, is he made to experience! True, we are assured that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God;" and we often see the happy effects of afflictions and trials. But why is this the lot of some and not of others? Of this man, rather than of that? Who can assign a reason, or make any other reply than the Son himself made in a case not less mysterious? "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." Or with Paul: "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Little of the glory of God, by the manifestations of his manifold wisdom, is discovered to his creatures in this world. Mere glimpses, compared with what it will be hereafter. It requires, not merely fuller disclosures of the Divine glory, but a more enlarged capacity than is reached in this life. Faith must give place to vision. And especially is this true in regard to the Divine sovereignty. We see this in the present state,

chiefly, and in connection with inspired declarations, wholly by its effects. We see the different manner in which he conducts towards his creatures, and even his own children, while we are expressly told that "he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." But he does not assign the reasons of his conduct; which enters into the very idea of his sovereignty. Not acting without reasons, or the best of reasons; but concealing the reasons from us. But it will not always be so. Hereafter he will disclose the reasons of all he did to his people, and perhaps, to all his creatures. What is mysterious to them here, will all be cleared up hereafter. They will not only be satisfied, but be filled with the most adoring admiration at the disclosure. God's sovereignty, which now is so often a stumbling-block to some of his own people, and still oftener awakens the displeasure of sinners, will then appear his crowning glory, for it will bring all his perfections to view. We shall see the bearing of them all on his conduct.

Nor will the happiness arising from this view of God be confined to men. It is, indeed, a glorious thought, that the salvation of sinners of our race has, and will forever have, an important bearing on countless myriads of intelligent beings, of every rank and order; and that their happiness will be inconceivably enhanced by all the operations of redeeming love. What scope is here given to the most enlarged benevolence, "to the intent, that now unto the princi-

palities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church, yea, by every Christian, the manifold wisdom of God." And if there are other worlds inhabited by intelligent beings, who can tell what influence the redemption of man will have on them, in unfolding to their view attributes and perfections of the infinite God, of which, without the mirror of redemption, they might have been forever ignorant! One object there will be in heaven which will forever attract all eyes, that would not have existed but for the redemption of man; in other words, the existence of the Church, that is, the man Christ Jesus.

We may presume that his human nature will exist there, *distinct* from the Divine, or the second person of the Godhead. We have some reason for supposing this, from what St. Paul says in regard to the end, or consummation of all things in the last day: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; for he hath put all enemies under his feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the *Son* also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Jesus Christ is called Son, and Son of God, not with reference to his Divine nature, but on account of his

Divine nature taking human nature into union with it. Thus we read, with reference to his Divine conception: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee, shall be called the *Son of God*." When, therefore, it is said by Paul, "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all," that is, God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I suppose the union between the Divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, as it existed here, will be dissolved; and yet the whole Godhead will shine forth gloriously through the *Man* Christ Jesus, and will then be an object of universal attraction and most exulting admiration, though not of supreme worship. At present, they are united, as they were on earth; for he has not yet given up his mediatorial kingdom, and will not, till the final consummation of all things. He has not ceased to discharge the office of Mediator, and will not, till every heir of heaven is confirmed in glory. But of this we have no certain information, and submit it only as a probable suggestion.

I close this discourse with the following reflections:

1. The Christian religion claims for itself the most cordial and grateful reception of every man. This is true, from whatever point of view it is contemplated. Not only is it the only scheme which saves the soul from eternal death, but the only scheme which exalts

human nature to the highest degree of perfection and glory. What state can be conceived so glorious as to be the *medium* through which the Infinite God displays all his perfections? This display of the Great God attracts the attention of all the holy in heaven, that of principalities and powers, and constitutes their highest happiness. Angels direct all their mighty energies to the investigation of the work of man's redemption. Their joy at the repentance of sinners is not the mere gratification of their benevolence in the sinner's eternal happiness, but arises chiefly from the manifestation of the Divine perfections which is made in the salvation of a single soul. Some new exhibition of "the manifold wisdom of God" is made in every such instance, in some peculiar circumstances attending each.

And is it nothing to be the occasion of this—not merely of their joy, but of thus being the medium of reflecting the Divine glory? If worthy of them as *spectators*, can it be less worthy of men as the *subjects* of it? *They* are holy and happy independently of us. Not so with us: our eternal happiness is involved. Nor is this all. There is an awful alternative—that alternative *eternal death!* If these considerations will not move the sinner, what will?

2. What a solemn responsibility rests on every Christian! And O, how little realized by most! In the light in which our subject has considered him, how must the hopes of multitudes of professors tremble, lest

they should be found, at last, to have borne the sacred name of Christ, without ever manifesting his glory! Every conversion is intended to manifest the glory of God to all his intelligent universe. Every sound conversion *does* manifest it.

What a solemn point of inquiry with every professing Christian among us is here presented! O, how little, at best, is God's glory the *motive* even, in the daily life, and it may be, in the professed worship, of many who call themselves Christians! But God is still on a throne of grace. There is not only forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, but in him are all the treasures of wisdom to guide, and grace to sanctify and fit the soul for heaven. Let his children apply to these treasures for all they need, and sinners resort to that overflowing fountain for all *they* need to prepare them for the same eternal, happy destiny!

XIII.

CHRIST, THE LIFE OF THE SOUL AND THE RESTORER OF ITS GLORY.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”—COL. 3 : 4.

WHEN our Saviour left the world, he gave assurance that he would return. At the moment of ascending from the Mount of Olives, two angels declared to his disciples, who witnessed the scene, that “this same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.” He himself often declared the same while he was yet in the world. And he only delays his second coming, because, “the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began,” has not yet been effected. In other words, because all his purposes respecting his kingdom on earth, have not yet been accomplished. The period, however, is hastening; indications of its nearer and nearer approach are daily multiplying. Ere long we believe he will come, and bring to a close the whole economy of human redemp-

tion, and settle all things for eternity. This is that appearing of the Saviour intimated in the text.

He is, indeed, said to come, in other and different senses. But this is his coming on the last day of time, and to close all time; to raise the dead; to change the then living; and to gather angels and men at his bar for the final judgment. "For the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him: then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." This august event is placed before the Christians at Colosse, by the Apostles, as containing the all-commanding motive to their perseverance in their heavenward course; and the glories of it, as furnishing the richest source of consolation and encouragement under all their trials and difficulties. Nor has the subject lost any of its solemnity or importance. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

I. Let us inquire into the meaning of the phrase, "Christ, our life."

II. Consider some of the glories of the saints, at his second appearing. If we consider the phrase, "Christ, our life," in the utmost extent of its meaning, and without regard to its particular application in the text and context, it would embrace the following facts, viz.

that he is the great Source of all life—the Author of our existence—its Preserver in the present and the coming world, as well as of spiritual life, and all the happiness which is experienced either here or hereafter. For all these are truths, plainly and abundantly taught in the word of God. But the Apostle did not here intend to give this latitude to its meaning. He evidently did not mean to include under the terms, *all* that those terms are capable of expressing. The declaration that “Christ is our life,” conveys a very different idea from the declaration that he is the *Author* of our existence as appears most clearly from the preceding context. The Apostle was addressing Christians in the *character* of Christians; those who had already risen with Christ, whom we exhorted to seek those things which were above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and to set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. This is true only of Christians. No others can be said to be already risen with Christ. Moreover, they are addressed as being “dead,” although they were still alive. The word *dead*, is of course not to be understood literally, as denoting a dissolution of the body; nor even spiritually, as applied to the unrenewed sinner: “dead in trespasses and sins.” Nor are these the only senses in which the word “dead,” is used. It is applied to Christians, as dead, not *in* sin, but *to* sin; to its reigning power. “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?”

As dead to the world; to its controlling influence. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." And again, dead to the rites, and ceremonies, and institutions of the Mosaic dispensation. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" And dead to the law, *i. e.*, to its finally condemning sentence. "For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Now, while these expressions are not applicable to any but Christians, and as Christ is *equally* the author of the existence of saints and sinners, and of all things, the phrase, "Christ our life," implies a peculiar relationship between him and his redeemed people. Such, as that the terms, death and life, will properly apply to them at the same time. And Paul so applies them to the Colossian Christians in the verse next preceding the text. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

There is then a peculiar sense in which the phrase, "Christ our life," is used in the text, as contradistinguished from the instances above-named. And we were

I. To inquire what that sense is.

1. It denotes that Christ is the sole author of spiritual life in contradistinction from spiritual death. Natural life and its continuance is the mere effect of

an act of Divine sovereignty. This was produced when God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Immortality was stamped on the soul, as well after as before the fall. But the fall utterly extinguished all spiritual life. It entirely effaced the holy, moral image of God. And every human being would forever have remained dead in sin, but for the Lord Jesus Christ. To effect a change in regard to this awful state, and eternal destiny of the sinner, rendered indispensable all that he has done and suffered; his assumption of our nature; his labors, sufferings, and death; his humiliation in the sepulchre; his resurrection, ascension, and intercessions; his purchase of the Spirit in his regenerating and sanctifying influences, and his regal administration, as Head over all things to the Church. For all these things, Christians are primarily and eminently indebted to Christ. They would have remained dead in sin during this life, to suffer the miseries of the second death forever, but for the interposition of the Son of God. This entirely changed the relations between him and them; or rather, created a *new* relationship, superadded to those of Creator and Preserver, or such as exist between him and the rest of mankind, generally: namely, that of Mediator, and his redeemed subjects. Here, then, in a peculiar and emphatic sense, "Christ is their life." He has raised them from the death of sin. He has by the Spirit whom he sent into the world, infused a new principle of vitality into them; so new, so different

from that which influenced them before, that it is called a *new birth*—a *new creation*. And this great change is expressly referred to Christ—“created anew in Christ Jesus.” Nor,

2. Is this a temporary state of existence, but abiding. The relationship which is thus created is indissoluble. No power short of that which produced it, can destroy it; and this he has bound himself by every possible assurance never to do. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

If Christians are indebted to Christ for the commencement of this life, they are not less indebted to him for its continuance. It is on no other ground than his own promise, that any Christian can expect to reach the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing in that new life itself which secures the continuance of its efforts, an hour or a moment. Nothing in the act of regeneration itself, or the first spiritual breath, or moral pulsation of the new-born soul, that insures continued holiness. The Christian rests all his hope of final salvation on the gracious declaration, and pro-

mise that "he who hath begun the good work will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ,"—forever. Is he not then, most emphatically, and in the highest sense, the Christian's life ?

3. Christ is the life of Christians, as the source and author of all *true* enjoyment in this world. Happiness is often denoted by the term *life*; and when this happiness flows from the possession of spiritual life, it is the highest sense in which the term applies to a mortal: "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace;" "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost;" "These things," said our Saviour, "have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." This is the highest happiness which Christians *can* know on earth. To have the joy of Christ has caused the highest exultation under the keenest tortures of the body. How Paul triumphed in his almost unequalled sufferings! How have martyrs exulted amid the flames that slowly consumed their bodies! How have tens of thousands of Christians been in ecstasies while all the agonies of death were upon them! And what Christian would exchange the consolations, the calm peace, the serenity of cheerful submission in his afflictions and various trials, for all the pleasures which this world can afford ?

Thus far we have limited our remarks to the Christian's present state of existence—to what Christ is to him *in this life*. Let us now send our thoughts into

the future. Let us look beyond the grave. We will lift the veil. We have seen how Christ is the life of Christians *here*—how is he their life hereafter?

4. Christ is the author of their *eternal life*, not their immortality merely in all the peculiar senses, and to the *highest possible degree*, in which he is their life in this world. He has assured them of their continued happy existence during the sleep of their bodies in the grave. All that he taught of the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, proves this. I might refer you to numerous examples and declarations. But I rest it on one express assurance of Christ. The day before his death, he said to his disciples, “Because *I* live, *ye* shall live also.” This declaration had no particular reference to his *own* or to *their resurrection*, or to any future period, implying a previous cessation of existence, but to his *continued* existence, and consequently *their* continued existence. Death would lay his body in the sepulchre; but he would still live, in the highest sense, and as the glorious Author of all Life, and Mediator for all his disciples. *Their* bodies, too, must go down to the grave; but their life, as his was not, should not be suspended or intermitted for an instant. Nor does the word “live,” simply mean continued *existence*, as synonymous with *immortality*. They needed no additional assurance of that. The kind object of the Saviour was to console them in view of his death, and his being taken from them. They were about to

lose their spiritual Head. They feared more for their *spiritual* life, than for their *natural* life. Jesus assures them that that is safe—safe after their bodies are laid in the dust. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” This exactly met the exigency of their case. But this declaration or assurance was by no means limited either to their remaining life after their Saviour should leave them, or their intermediate state; but no less certainly secured their *eternal*, happy existence in heaven. They would live as the confirmed objects of his everlasting favor and unchangeable love; live as the purchase of his death; live in glory; yea, live and reign with him, as kings and priests unto God forever. The spiritual life begun here, should issue in, and be consummated by, life eternal. Here is a distinct sense in which Christ is the life of Christians. It is indeed true, that the *wicked* shall live, during the slumbers of *their* bodies in the grave, and live forever. But ah, how *different* their life! *Their* life is the soul’s *death*; their *spiritual* death ends in death eternal. But on what different ground is their continued life placed? It has no connection with the life of the Saviour, only as the author and upholder of their being. No injustice were done to them, no violation of any covenant engagement; for they sustain no such relation, or kind promise made to them, if after their resurrection, to prove his victory over the last enemy, death, he should at once strike them out of existence, annihilating both soul and body.

Once more. Christ is the life of Christians as the restorer of their bodies from the grave. This indeed is not essential to their happiness; for they are happy in their disembodied state. Yet the resurrection of their bodies will be a great blessing; and no doubt, greatly augment their happiness. It is not, however, so important in itself, as in its connections and bearings. The truth of the whole Christian system depended on the resurrection of the body. Here is seen its essential importance. Hence, the Apostles went forth, everywhere "preaching, through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead." It was the foundation of all hope and faith. The Saviour rested the credibility of his mission upon the fact of his resurrection. As that were true or false, he was willing that his claims to Messiahship should be admitted or denied. He did rise, and forever established those claims. Had he not risen, that had been demonstration that he was a deceiver. Had he been an impostor, he could not have risen; for that had been a Divine sanction of the imposture, an idea most abhorrent. But the just inference from his resurrection is that of all his true followers. On this connection Paul based his triumphant argument in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

Still, the body's resurrection is important in itself. It is a source of high satisfaction to every Christian. The body is an endeared companion of the immortal spirit: its consignment to the grave, and even tempo-

rary lodgment there, is a painful reflection. The grave is a dark and gloomy receptacle. We shrink back at the thought of lying down in it; we shudder to see our friends and relatives placed in it, even though they died in Christ. But the rich consolation is, that they are not forever to lie there. Joy beams from the assurance of a resurrection. But for this fondly-cherished belief, what tenfold gloom would hover around the tomb, even though the disembodied spirit might be happy as, and like the angels in heaven, who are unclothed spirits! But Christ has poured light into the grave, and made it the sweet resting-place of all his followers. He will watch all their scattered dust, and at the appointed day will collect and raise it; for Christ, to the Christian, is "the Resurrection and the Life." True, all others will be raised; but the resurrection of the wicked is a mere act of Christ's holy and omnipotent sovereignty. It is no part of the purchase of his death. He did not die and rise again to secure *their* resurrection. It will be no blessing to come forth from their graves: they will be raised to show the Saviour's universal and complete dominion to conquer death, the last enemy, and him that hath the power of death, *i. e.*, the devil, and that soul and body may share in retribution for the sins, which in their connection, they committed.

Thus is Christ, in every important, and in the most emphatic sense, *the Christian's life*. We proceed

II. To consider some of the glories of the saints at

the Saviour's second appearance: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him *in glory*." We have, indeed, anticipated a little the order of events; but there are important items connected with them for distinct consideration. And

1. When Christ comes a second time, the spirits of all who have slept in him will accompany him. "When Christ shall appear," says the text, "then shall *ye also appear with him*." "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God *bring with him*." "Behold, the Lord cometh, *with ten thousand of his saints*." "At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, *with all his saints*." Happy as they had been in their disembodied state, in heaven, yet this will be a new scene, and glorious as new. We may suppose that when Christ shall come to raise the dead and judge the world, he himself will put on new splendors and glories, such as he had not disclosed even in heaven. The language in which he describes the scene justifies, and even suggests this thought: "For the Son of Man shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in *great power and glory*." "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a *shout*, with the voice of the archangel, and with the *trump* of God."

And will not this new exhibition of the majesty and glory of Christ, in the character of Judge of quick and dead, inspire both saints and angels with new, and

hitherto unfelt, raptures? The Saviour has described the happiness of the redeemed, as produced by beholding his glory: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may *behold* my glory." And every new discovery will awaken higher degrees of admiration and call forth louder hosannahs. The scene must be most enrapturing: the Judge in *his own glory and the glory of the Father*, attended by all the *holy angels*, and the countless millions of justified spirits made perfect! What a glorious spectacle! What new honor will invest every heir of heaven's eternal and unfading glories! Verily, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear," well might the Apostle say to Christians, "then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

2. Consider the *object* of Christ's descent to earth. He will come to awake the bodies of the dead, most of them from a long sleep in their graves. What a scene will present itself at the blast of the resurrection trumpet! What a bursting of graves, and tombs, and sepulchres! What a heaving of seas and oceans, which have embosomed unnumbered multitudes! What a breaking up of the surface of the whole earth!

But of these scenes the saints who accompany the Judge will not be *mere spectators*. They will deeply share in them. They will come to receive their own bodies. And with what intense interest will they hover over the places of their deposit, and watch for their rising forms! In heaven they had seen, and

with delight had gazed on the glorious pattern according to which their bodies should be fashioned. They had there beheld the Saviour's body, resplendent, beyond the sun when he shineth in his strength, and that is the glorious model of their own. O how different from what they were when they were laid in the grave! How is corruption changed to incorruption, and loathsome deformity to the most resplendent beauty! With what raptures will each receive his own body! Never more to be separated—eternal, fit companions. And then they ascend in clouds more glorious than that which overshadowed the transported three on the Mount of Transfiguration. Nor is their joy yet full; there are other scenes of deep and thrilling interest. For,

3. A vast multitude is yet to join them, and become their eternal associates. So has inspiration taught us: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and shall be caught up with them, to meet the Lord in the air." Christian benevolence rejoices at every addition made to the ranks of the redeemed. What affords higher joy to Christians on earth than to see multitudes added to their number! The last day will find the earth full of inhabitants. The long and happy period of the millennium, when holiness shall

universally prevail, will have just been brought to a close. For although after this Satan shall be loosed out of prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations, and gather Gog and Magog together to battle, to compass the camp of the saints, and the beloved city," yet scarcely will their forces be marshalled, and "*fire* shall come down from God out of heaven, and shall devour them." All who remain will be holy unto the Lord. In an instant, these will all be changed from mortal to immortal, and join the vast multitudes just raised from their graves. What shouts will rend the air when this mighty and glorified throng shall be added to those millions of happy beings who have just received their new, immortal bodies! But neither yet are their joys raised to the highest pitch.

4. They are now to stand before the universal Judge, whose great white throne is erected in the air, around which are gathered all nations, with all the hosts of angels, sinless and apostate. But they do not stand there in terrors; the judgment, so fearful to the guilty, will bring *no terrors* to the righteous. That will be the day of their public acquittal—the day of their highest triumph, when they will be confirmed in holiness and happiness. "He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." The wicked sentenced—the judgment scenes closed—the earth in flames—these heavens blotted out,—the saints mount upward to the heaven of heavens, led by their glorious Redeemer,

and enter the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; there they shall "live and reign, kings and priests unto God, even the Father, forever and ever." There we must take our leave of them. We can go no farther. God has revealed no more to us of that happy world. What the redeemed will become in the revolving ages of eternity, "it doth not yet appear."

And what more is needed? What more can the Christian wish to raise his hope, or urge him on to final unwavering perseverance? What more to lift him, in his warmest affections, far above the objects of sense and time, and the low and sordid transient pleasures and pursuits of this world? What more to sustain and comfort him in his various trials and afflictions? Where is the darkness of the grave itself, when looked into by light, beaming from a revealed heaven? Dwell not, Christian, on what you now are, save it be to mourn over your remaining depravity, your unspeakable unworthiness of the honors and glories which await you in the coming world; save it be to deepen the conviction of your obligations to your Saviour; to kindle your love to him, to holier and higher degree, and to labor more faithfully to promote his kingdom in the world. Let the glory hereafter to be revealed be the all-absorbing object, for it involves the glory of Jehovah himself.

Think, if you are faithful unto the end—and that end is near—where you *now* stand, just on the verge of those ineffable glories at which we have barely

hinted. Soon you will be laid in the grave! But Christ has made that grave a place of sweet repose to the Christian. It is the land of silence, but not of *forgetfulness*. There is One who will remember it; One who will constantly watch over it, and all the precious dust of his children that sleep in it. Your own released spirit, too, even if not permitted often to visit it, will one day be guided to the spot, when He, who is "the Resurrection and the Life," shall come a second time, you and all the disembodied saints accompanying him, to open the graves of all who have slept in him; and you shall receive your own body adorned with immortal beauty! Think, Christian, of those eternal realities, and let the thought moderate your worldly desires. A little while, and how will this world then appear to you! A little while, and this world will not be; for its very elements shall melt away! Nor will it ever receive another thought, except as the place where the Saviour labored, and bled, and died, to redeem lost sinners, and where you received your existence, and were made an heir of glory. Its riches, and honors, and pleasures, which now you too ardently covet; and your trials, too, under which you so often groan and repine, will all be forgotten. The inhabitants of heaven have no thoughts to bestow on these things.

To the impenitent and unbelieving I have made no application of our subject, and I shall make none. We leave it to them to make it for *themselves*, and close with commending our whole subject to God for his blessing.

XIV.

HEAVENLY TREASURES.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”—MATTHEW 6 : 19, 20.

THE history of mankind in general has been a history of supreme devotedness to this world. The limited period of their earthly existence, with here and there an exception, has bounded their pursuits, their desires, and their hopes. Striking and solemn events have daily reminded them that this world is not their final home, nor place of long continuance; yet temporal things have engrossed and absorbed their hearts. Their cry has been, “Who will show us any earthly good?” “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” wholly forgetful or unmindful of the immortality and final destiny of their souls. Or, if they ever send their thoughts beyond the grave, appalled at the gloom with which it is shrouded, they soon recall them. They look forward to no inheritance in heaven, when called to relinquish their possessions on earth.

Alas, all *their* treasures lie within the narrow circle of this life! But these must fail them, or they must leave them. Nor will they ease them of a single pain, in the hour of separation. This is the folly which our Saviour reproveth in the former verse of our text; and while he would dissuade from laying up treasures exclusively on the earth, or placing our affections inordinately upon them, he kindly directs to a substitute, which secures an infinite remuneration for every sacrifice made to obtain it: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Shall we consider this a *command*, for it comes with all the authority of the infinite God?—*then* our obligation to obey is obvious. Shall we regard it as *good advice* merely, and it certainly comes from One who knows the value of the soul, and what estimate to place on all worlds?—*then* it will be easy to show that to disregard it is the deepest folly, and to observe and follow it our highest wisdom. Our task, then, is an easy one, for our object will be to show,—

I. The folly of the one course. And

II. The wisdom of the other.

Little is required to be said in explanation of the text. Treasures on *earth* and treasures in *heaven* are here presented in *contrast*; and the one or the other

as an object of supreme desire. And the proposition virtually is, that we make our election of the one or the other as a supreme good. To *which* will we give the preference? They are here to be regarded as man's *chief* inheritance, and the one to the exclusion of the other. They are not necessarily inconsistent with each other. A man may have much of this world's good, and yet have treasures in heaven. On the ground of this compatibility, our Saviour himself has said, "Make to yourselves *friends* of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." A rare case, indeed, yet not impossible; for, with reference to this very point, the difficulty with which a rich man shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, the same Divine lips assure us that "with God all things are possible." The subject being thus understood, I proceed to show:

I. The folly of laying up treasures, exclusively, on earth. And this will appear from a very few and simple considerations:

1. From their *uncertainty*. Earthly possessions are uncertain treasures; the history of the world in this respect is a history of constant changes; a continual succession, as almost every individual is concerned, of gains and losses, successes and disappointments. Whatever the worldly good one may have acquired, he holds it by a most uncertain tenure. Wealth is constantly changing hands. "Riches take to themselves wings and fly away." The most ample possessions seldom

descend undiminished, or unimpaired, to the third generation. Often not even to the second. Alas, the wealthy proprietor himself is not unfrequently reduced to poverty; and the splendid palace exchanged for the humblest cottage; the sumptuous living for the coarsest fare—splendid equipage for a simple staff. *Honors* are still more unstable and fleeting. If aspirants succeed, their success is usually a preparatory step to deeper disappointment. If they rise high, it is often that their fall may be rendered but the more conspicuous. And these remarks are equally applicable to everything of an earthly nature. Change and uncertainty are common to them all.

2. Earthly possessions, even were they certain in their continuance, are unsatisfying in their very nature. If it be objected that none are entitled to be heard on this point, but such as have made the experiment, that only the rich and the honorable are competent here to give their testimony, then we will refer you to such. There once lived the man whose judgment in both these respects was the result of experience; and whose judgment has been confirmed as a matter and record of revelation. Solomon attained to and held the highest honors for forty years. During the same period he possessed unbounded wealth. While no individual ever possessed more of either, or of anything which the human heart ever coveted, no other individual in these respects ever experienced fewer reverses. He held all, both riches and honors, till the hand of

death tore him from them. And hear him pronounce his judgment. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." But Solomon's testimony stands not alone. It is sustained by the unanimous voice, we hazard nothing in saying, of all who ever swayed a sceptre, or wore a crown. And to these, if they would utter the sincere convictions of their own hearts, we might add all who have rolled in wealth, or revelled in luxury, since the world began. Let them speak from their thrones, and their palaces, and their banqueting halls, and on this point we should hear but one voice. The universal verdict would be, "Earth and its treasures are *unsatisfying*." The truth is, this world was never intended to afford a satisfying portion to such a being as man is. It has, indeed, its sources of enjoyment; and these sources are numerous and rich, and should awaken our liveliest gratitude to the beneficent Author of them. But even these are adapted to his lower rather than his higher nature; his animal than his spiritual constitution. Earth is too narrow in its limits for the range of an immortal mind; too gross in its objects, too sordid in its pursuits, to satisfy the craving of the soul. If they were once better adapted to each other—if earth was once a fitter residence for man, it was not merely on account of the objects which it contained, but the Divine glory and beauty which they reflected, and the deep impress of the holy image of God in man, which qualified him to apprehend and appreciate, and relish that beauty and glory. But

both have undergone a sad change—especially *man*. Such a change as has brought the objects of earth and heaven into a wide contrast, and unceasing conflict, and made the pursuits of the one perilous to those of the other. But

3. The possessions of this world must fail us, or we must be torn from them. The connection must be dissolved. And it is of short and uncertain continuance. Then were this world eternal, and were it all our own, what would be its value to us, when we are removed from it? What to us were tried gold that should never tarnish, and mines and mountains of silver, which are exhaustless, when once we become spirits in eternity? “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it.” Even the body which we so much love, and love to cherish, to decorate, and to pamper, and cling to with so much tenacity, with so strong a grasp, must be relinquished, resigned, and thrown aside, nor one of its ornaments, nor one of its graces, natural or artificial, will accompany the spirit to its future place of residence. One moment after death, they will all be to us as though they had never been; or we had no connection with or knowledge of them, save only the moral traces they leave upon the soul.

But earth and its treasures are not eternal. They will outlive us—they will abide after our connection with them shall have been dissolved. But they will not abide forever. A period is fixed to their exist-

ence. They are not merely to undergo a change; to be renovated, have those beauties and glories restored to them which sin marred, and God, on man's account, blotted out; but they are to perish; be consumed and annihilated, at the second coming of the Son of God. "For the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." We shall all behold this grand catastrophe—the funeral of this world—this material universe. But it will be with other eyes. Standing as we then shall, either on the battlements of heaven, or the verge of hell, and beholding this world on fire, what folly can exceed that of having made the treasures of this world the object of supreme pursuit or desire! the folly of having taxed every energy and directed every effort to gather earthly treasures, to the exclusion of a heavenly inheritance! And when bereft of all, the once devoted worldling is still an immortal unsatisfied being. Nor will it then be as is now sometimes the case, that the recollection and review of past success and eminence will afford satisfaction. For men may fall from the very summit of honor, may sink from wealth to poverty, and after the first moments of disappointment and mortification, still derive satisfaction from a recollection of their former greatness. How often have we witnessed the sparkling of joy, the proud

self-complacency of the now reduced and impoverished man, while recounting his former wealth, or recalling the honors which once clustered around his brow, but which have faded and fallen. But not so hereafter. Crowns, and sceptres, and riches, though worn, and wielded, and enjoyed, down to the last moment of life, will then be regarded as very little things—the mere toys of kings and misers: yes, and infinitely worse than such; for while they were the objects of supreme regard, they cheated the immortal soul of its once attainable eternal inheritance. Nor are these negative qualities all. For we remark on this topic,

Once more. That supreme devotedness to earthly treasures disqualifies for a heavenly inheritance. It perverts all the powers of the soul, and gives a distaste for all the objects and employments which heaven affords. It is entirely inconsistent with the exercise and practice of holiness. This is in accordance with the experience and oft-repeated declarations of Christians. For Christians often suffer the world to exert a supreme control and influence over them. Then it is that their spiritual comfort is destroyed. Then it is that they forget God, cast off fear, and restrain prayer, and neglect other important duties, or preserve the mere form, while they feel not the power of godliness. Their affections become alienated from God, and diverted from spiritual and heavenly objects. They lose sight of their high and holy dis-

inction. And their conversation is, of course, withdrawn from heaven. Christians have always found the world to be their greatest enemy. And this is agreeable to the reiterated declarations of God's word. Against nothing did our Saviour utter more frequent or solemn cautions than against the influence of the world. Hear him: "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." The world assails every source, and addresses itself, in some form of temptation or other, to every remaining corruption of the Christian's heart. Whenever it gains the ascendancy, grace dies. "The lust of the eye, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world." But if this be its deadening influence over the Christian, if it ever bring the child of God so far under its control, as utterly to suppress, for the time, the operations of grace, and draw off his heart from God, and duty, and holiness, and heaven, what must be its influence over the sinner, with whom it is not merely supreme at times, but supreme at all times?—the sinner, who knows no other good?—who seeks no other good? who desires no other good? All whose treasures, and, of course, his affections, are laid up, and centred here? "For where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also." What feeling, what qualification has such a man for a state of holiness—for a heavenly inheritance? We appeal to the candid sinner himself. We

ask the worldling, if every object and every employment of heaven, so far as he has any just, speculative views of that world, is not repulsive? How can it be otherwise? Our Saviour tells us that the supreme love of Mammon involves the hatred of God; that service to the one, is rebellion against the other. Could, then, the devotee of Mammon be happy in the presence of an unloved—yea, hated God? Could the uninterrupted and supreme love and service of the world, be a qualification for the ceaseless and ardent service of Jehovah? No sinner believes this. Every reflecting sinner admits the necessity of a change. Either earth is now a fair type of heaven, or the heart must be changed in order to enjoy heaven; the former he does not believe; the latter, however much he may dislike, he cannot disbelieve. These few plain and simple considerations are sufficient to prove the truth of our first position: that it is folly, and even madness, in an immortal being, to lay up treasures, exclusively, on earth, or to regard them as an object of supreme desire; uncertain, unsatisfying, perishable even with the using, they must ultimately fail us, or we be torn away from them—will, at a future fixed period, be blotted from existence, and utterly disqualify for the enjoyment of a heavenly inheritance. O, if this be not folly, tell us where folly can be found! We proceed,

II. To show the wisdom of laying up treasures in heaven.

If it be asked, what constitute these treasures, as here possessed? we answer, Whatever prepares the soul for future and eternal happiness. They embrace that knowledge and love of God, and those exercises and acts of holiness, which adapt the moral character to the state and employments of heaven. Of what the eternal inheritance of the saints is in all its richness and fulness, as actually possessed by the glorified, we here indeed know, and can know, but little. Who can tell us what it is to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But we know something of their nature and properties; and remark,

1. That they are imperishable, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." If then we speak of wealth, the treasures of heaven are "durable riches." If of dainties which nourish and never cloy, they are "meat which endureth unto eternal life;" living bread and living waters, which issue from the throne of the Most High. If of honors, they are crowns which never tarnish: the honor of descent from God, and of being kings and priests unto God, yea the honor of sitting with Christ on a throne of glory. If of pleasures, "at God's right hand are pleasures forevermore." In a word, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." If then the stamp of immortality on that

which is supremely excellent in itself, is a consideration of weight, the wisdom of laying up treasures in heaven is apparent.

2. The treasures of heaven are not only imperishable in their nature, but they are laid up in a place of perfect security. "Where thieves do not break through nor steal." Into heaven none but the perfectly holy enter. Of course there will be none to despoil the saint of his treasures. There is no wicked hand to purloin, nor defile with its polluting touch. Its gates are barred by an omnipotent hand.

3. Saints in heaven will not, for a moment, be separated from their inheritance. They cannot alienate their possessions; they cannot be deprived of them. Sin only could produce a separation. But God has confirmed them in holiness. There will be no suspension, no diminution of their enjoyment. "There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever."

4. The treasures of heaven are adapted to man's better part, to the immortal soul; and that soul bearing the restored, perfect image of God. As the soul is more valued than the body, so the treasures of heaven are more valuable than those of earth. The latter, unless wholly consecrated to God, can only feed the appetite, delight the senses, pamper the body, inflate the pride, and please the fancy. But while the soul may be miserably poor, in the midst of the richest

profusion of earthly good, and that which is nourishment to the body, prove fatal poison to the soul, the saint carries none of these attributes of his carnal nature with him to heaven. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The happiness of heaven will eminently consist in the knowledge and love of God. And for new attainments and degrees in these, the glorified spirit will be perfectly fitted. These constitute the highest happiness of Christians, in the present imperfect state. To know God here, limited as that knowledge is, is the beginning of eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." God has made but limited discoveries or revelations of himself to his creatures, in this world. Enough only to awaken the strongest desire to know him more perfectly. Nor could mortals endure a sight of him in his heavenly glory. Mortal eyes are too feeble to behold the glory of God and the splendor of heaven. For this they must receive spiritual bodies; to see as they are seen, the saints must have other eyes than those of sense. "There are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial. But the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another;" perfectly and infinitely different.

Once more. While the treasures of heaven are adapted to the nature of the soul, they are adequate

to its enlarged and constantly enlarging capacities and desires.

Progression is essential to *continued* happiness. Mere repetition will tire, will cloy. At least, this is true so far as we can judge from what we now know of the principles of human nature. I know not why this should not be true of spiritual enjoyments. It seems to be a law of our spiritual nature, equally operative in an embodied and a disembodied state, and which no sanctifying power of Divine grace can annul or affect. In regard to spiritual enjoyment, the soul is not at all dependent on the body. When Paul was caught up to the third heavens, his discoveries filled him with inexpressible ecstasy; yet, he tells us, whether he was *in* the body or *out* of the body, he could not say. We are not, therefore, necessarily to infer that even in that hour of high and ineffable enjoyment, his soul actually left the body for a single moment. And we have often had proof that the exercises of the mental faculties depend not at all on the state of the body. Thousands of Christians, on the dying bed, have had the most enlarged conceptions of Divine things, and experienced enjoyment altogether new to them, even when all the functions of the body had ceased.

We adduce these cases to show, that in regard to the happiness of the soul, it is safe and legitimate to argue from the present to the future; and if so, gradual increase, constant advancement, is essential to eternal perfect happiness. The notions which some seem to

entertain of the heavenly state are, to me at least, entirely inconsistent with a state of perfect happiness; for many appear to imagine that the capacities of the soul, on its entrance into heaven, are enlarged to their utmost extent, never afterwards, during the ceaseless ages of eternity, to be surpassed; that the capacity of an infant spirit is not outmeasured by that of the most mature saint, or even seraph; and, of course, that there is no progression, no increase, no advancement, from glory to glory; that the sum of enjoyment is as great the first moment as at any subsequent lapse of ages. This, to me, is inconsistent with all rational views of a state of perfect bliss. It is contrary to all the analogies to which we have referred, and, in my judgment, to the very nature of the soul, and to all the known laws by which the human mind is regulated. On the contrary, therefore, we believe that heaven is a place and state of eternal advancement; that the faculties of the soul will, by new acquisitions of knowledge, be gradually but rapidly expanding; and that, consequently, the sum of its happiness will be eternally swelling. And our present argument is, that the holy and immense treasures of heaven are adapted in their nature, and adequate in their amount, to all the enlarged and eternally enlarging capacities and desires of the immortal soul. These treasures are exhaustless; they centre in, they proceed from, the infinite God. O, what a state, my brethren, must that be, where the infinite Jehovah is constantly unfolding

new glories; where the soul is no less constantly making new discoveries, is filled with new wonders, and drinking in new pleasures! To what a degree of dignity, of knowledge, of bliss, and glory, will every soul that enters heaven attain!

Look, look upon that little infant—just now struggling into life, and now struggling in the last agonies of death! Its lately inspired soul is worth ten thousand worlds like this. It bears the stamp of a priceless value. In the mysteries of Divine Providence, it breaks away from its little frail tenement, to shine, with powers enlarged, in glory. *This*, on its very entrance into heaven! Yet this is its first degree—the incipient step to endless advancement in knowledge and in bliss. Think of it, ye bereaved, mourning parents, for you know how to appreciate the delightful thought; ye who have followed the little lump of clay it left for you to bedew with your tears, and deposit in the dust, think that while you were performing those offices of tender, bleeding affection, how its spirit mounted aloft! What new wonders it had already traced in the infinite Godhead; to what new degrees of knowledge and happiness it had attained, even before the removal of its precious remains to the land of silence;—yes, even while it lay encoffined in the dying chamber, or enwrapt in the winding-sheet, or scarcely cold in the embrace of death!

Think of it, weeping parents, of an infant spirit gone to heaven before you, and hushed be your sighs, and

wipe away your tears! However limited its faculties here were, they are destined to surpass what those of Gabriel now are. Nor will they ever reach a bound, either in knowledge or bliss, they will not pass.

O, what an infinite value, then, is enstamped on the immortal soul! And, my hearers, each of *us* has such a soul; and it may be saved. It is destined to exist forever; and it may exist in the ever-increasing enjoyment of eternal glory. What a prize, then, is placed before us! How worthy of every effort to secure it! What sacrifice too great to obtain it!

And now, let me ask in conclusion, shall the absorbing cares, the eager pursuits of this world prevent securing all this infinite and eternal good? A world which is to be forever blotted from existence. Shall the small pittance of it, either of honors, or riches, or pleasures, which a few years at longest, of supreme and successful devotedness to it may secure—*prevent*? Who of you will be guilty of such folly and madness, as to place that miserable pittance in successful competition with the honors, the riches, the splendors, the ineffable and unfading glories of heaven? Alas, the collected crowns, and diadems, and sceptres, and revenues of kingdoms, what are they! Yea, and ten thousand worlds like this; or as many, and as rich, and as beautiful, as Omnipotence itself could bring into being, but under the decree of final annihilation, what were they! If they stood between you and heaven, their sacrifice were infinite wisdom. Who would re-

gret it, as he gazed on a world on fire—himself secure in heaven? And yet, for what trifles are countless millions of our race bartering away that heaven! Bartering, in the sense that heaven is attainable—bartering it for a few baubles! a few gilded toys! a little glittering dust! a puff of human praise! a short round of giddy and sordid pleasures!

And are these little and transient possessions, these momentary pleasures, the *terms* on which they make the sacrifice? And when all these are over and gone forever, is the mere recollection of the short-lived possession to be the remuneration for a heaven lost! Ay, and the boon for a hell secured!

We object to no man's possession of all that he can honestly acquire of this world's treasures—reminding him of the claims which God and benevolence have upon it. But that is dishonestly acquired, be it much or be it little, which robs the soul of salvation; the poor man who yields to the absorbing influence of the world, is as certainly lost as the rich man.

But we have done. I have feebly placed the treasures of earth and heaven in contrast before you. If we will prefer the former, it is with a full knowledge of the consequences. The folly, the guilt, and the ruin which follow are all our own, and of our own procuring, while God is clear, and will be glorified in our eternal destruction.

XV.

ANALOGY BETWEEN THE

ISRAELITES' JOURNEY TO CANAAN, AND THE CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY TO HEAVEN.

“They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way: they found no city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.”—PSALM 107 : 4-7.

IN this passage the Psalmist alludes to the journeyings of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. The distance between the place of their departure and that of their destination was very short. But they were forty years in accomplishing their journey. They wandered in the wilderness. Their course was exceedingly erratic, solitary, difficult, and arduous. They often murmured, and were thrown into perplexities and distresses. They often sought to return to the country which they had left, resuming the practices and customs which they had professed most solemnly to renounce and abandon. But their way was hedged up, and they were plunged into new difficulties and trials. Sometimes they appeared desirous of settling down short of the country of their destined rest. But

they found no city to dwell in. They were left to the pains of hunger and thirst, and their soul fainted in them. But their distresses, though the consequence of their iniquities, were not visited upon them, merely as a punishment, but as *disciplinary* and as correctives. God had only their best good in view. He thereby showed them the sin and folly of self-dependence and distrust of his wisdom and goodness, and how soon and certainly they would be destroyed if left to their own control and guidance. Hence, in their troubles, they cried unto the Lord; and he mercifully heard them, and delivered them out of their distresses, and led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation; a place of permanent abode and rest and blessings, which God had prepared for them.

These remarks are a mere commentary on the text, which furnishes a history of the main points of the forty years' experience of the Israelites in the wilderness, from Egypt to Canaan. And what Christian can fail to see how close and striking the points of coincidence between their experience and that of the people of God now, and in every generation, in his dealings towards them, and their course from this world to the kingdom of heaven, the place which God has prepared for their eternal abode! Inspired writers themselves have often referred to the one, to illustrate the other. A principal reason for this is, that true religion is eminently practical. While it is founded on those great

principles which are laid, and which produce a renovating effect on the heart, they are designed to exert a controlling influence over the life. It does not consist in a system of doctrines, to be *believed* only; in a creed, however correct. Such a system or creed is, indeed, necessary—is absolutely essential, whether in a formal manner expressed or not. No man's conduct is likely to be better than his belief, nor will be correct in the belief of essentially erroneous sentiments. Correct evangelical views of Divine truth, however, will be involved in the course which I have prescribed to myself in the remarks to be submitted.

My object will be to trace the parallel, or points of agreement between the two courses which we have intimated.

I. As the Israelites took their departure from a land of bondage, so have Christians come out from the world, a state, though of a different kind, yet one of no less severe bondage. No bondage is worse than bondage to sin. It is the bondage of man's immortal part,—bondage of the soul. It is the being led captive to the will of the great adversary of God and of man, of the glory of the one, and the highest interests of the other. Sin has blighted a world, which originally reflected only the glorious perfections of its Maker; has changed its whole aspect; turned all its loveliness, not indeed into physical deformity, but into objects and sources of temptation, which subjects the soul to the worst kind of servitude,—to moral

deformity and endless ruin. On its account, God cursed the very ground. And what was originally created for an abode of the purest freedom and happiness, became a thorny wilderness—a world of sickness, sorrow, pain, and death. Provision has indeed been made for man's redemption from such a state; ample atonement for his sin has been made, by the greatest sacrifice which heaven itself could furnish; and there are yet to be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; and to this high and happy destiny those will be exalted who here bear God's restored moral image. Hence the command, "Come out from the world, and be ye separate." Break away from this bondage to sin. Renounce the principles, customs, and fashions of this world. And true Christians have obeyed this Divine injunction. They have been liberated from this bondage, and set their faces towards the heavenly Canaan. This is no less a reality to them than the Exodus was to the children of Israel. They have themselves viewed it as a step of no less importance—of the highest importance. They have equally professed to turn their faces from all the tempting objects, and all the crushing restraints, and cruel servitude of their former foes, and their former experience. They commenced, too, their course with like resolutions to persevere in it to the end.

In the commencement of their respective courses, there is a fact of deep solemnity, which publicly

marked their first step, which ought not to pass unnoticed. That first step with both was taken under all the solemnities of a special Divine ordinance, both designed to direct the mind and the eye of faith to the same object, and both solemnly binding to the same glorious Being. With the one, it was the Pass-over—with the other, the Sacramental Supper. Both had special regard to Christ, the Messiah. With the one, as yet to come. With the other, as already come. The look was only in different directions, but it was to the same object. Under these solemnities, they both set their faces towards Canaan, and that infinitely better world, of which Canaan was but a type; and probably felt, as they then resolved, that their course would always be onward. For, without such a purpose and feeling, with proper dependence on Divine grace, the evidence would be wanting of even sincerity in the profession which is made, if even this were all. But

II. There is another and sadder point of coincidence between those Israelites and Christians generally.

The former soon began to wander. Scarcely had they reached their first station or encampment at the edge of the wilderness, before their murmurings commenced. On the very first appearance of danger, they desponded, their faith failed, and they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of

Egypt? It had been better for us to have served the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." And notwithstanding a signal act of Providence in their behalf, they had scarcely sung their first song of triumph over their enemies, when they again gave proofs of sad defection. The faithfulness and goodness of God so soon lost all their influence over them.

It is indeed true, that the parallel between them and Christians generally does not hold, in all these points of view; it is to be borne in mind, that they were not all Israel that were of Israel. Probably few of them had real faith, while the chief objects at which they looked, and by which they were influenced, were temporal blessings. In these particulars, the points of agreement would be seen only between them and hypocrites, or the self-deceived; yet their conduct cannot fail to remind us of a lamentable fact, scarcely less common and censurable, viz., the readiness with which Christians, true converts, leave their first love, the influence which the world exerts over them, their return to practices which they once, and very properly, regarded as inconsistent with Christian character and the Christian profession. There may be an abatement of the mere ardor or fervor of love where real love is not diminished, but in fact has become a steadier and firmer principle of Christian action or conduct. This is seen in many a growing Christian, in many a mature Christian, compared with his appearance at and soon after the period of his conversion. There are also

numerous instances where what at first had the appearance of ardent love was only the excitement of animal feelings. This of course will soon subside; but unhappily, too many such are unwisely and incautiously received into the Church, often to their own great injury and injury of the Church. But abating both these classes, it is too true, generally, that real Christians are often found in a state of sad declension. Like the Israelites, many of whom we have reason to believe were truly pious, they wander in a solitary way; not merely an unfrequented way, but a disconsolate way, and which affords no comfort or real enjoyment. It has particular respect to the state of the mind. And how perfectly descriptive is this of the true Christian, when fallen into a state of declension. He may not neglect the observance of the external duties of religion. But they are performed in a listless, cold, and formal manner. Prayer is lip-service, rather than that of the heart. Nor is it unlikely, that in such a state, even external duties are often omitted. It is not that the mind itself is less occupied, but too much engrossed with other things. And when the hours of reflection come, as come they will to a real, but delinquent child of God, I need not say, there can be little or no enjoyment, and that the way of such a man is solitary, gloomy, sad, cheerless.

III. There is a more lamentable point of coincidence, though but an advanced stage of delinquency to that just considered. The Israelites often looked back to

the country which they had left with strong desire to return to it, though, at the time of their departure, they rejoiced to turn their backs upon it forever. And though not permitted to do that, they wished to settle down in a city short of the place of their destination. This was not merely as a place of residence ; but implied a desire of those practices, customs, and enjoyments of a worldly nature, which they had on their departure renounced ; and though they found no such place to dwell in, yet it showed the worldly state of their minds and hearts. How like the same is the course of multitudes, perhaps at times, of most Christians ! The particular objects may not be the same ; yet there is the same disregard of God's authority and of their own vows ; the same selfishness, which is the source and essence of all sin. When they come out from the world, and by profession, publicly separate themselves from the world, it is with a strong purpose and resolve to return no more to its sinful practices.

But soon their firmness is shaken. Their desires and purposes are not dismissed at once, but only relaxed. They commence a compromise with their consciences. At length they yield some important point, with scarcely a suspicion that they have made any sacrifice of religious principle, or that they have entered on forbidden ground. Or, should such a suspicion arise, some excuse or palliation is ready at hand. Like the Israelites in the last stage of their rebellion against God, they have not actually molten

or formed an image before which to fall down and worship, saying, "These are our gods;" but they have their idols. Mammon, which embraces everything but the true God, has supplanted him in the affections of their hearts. Their cares multiply, and become more pressing in their demands, and of course more absorbing. Religious duties are crowded out of their place: God's word, less frequently and less carefully read, or wholly deferred to the leisure of the Sabbath. The closet for secret prayer and communion with him who seeth in secret, is less often visited. The family altar, if ever erected, is prostrated: God's holy day less strictly observed, one of the most decisive marks of a church in declension.

If the express, authoritative command of God to keep holy the Sabbath day is not strictly observed, we may rest assured, there is little else which God approves or accepts. And that command, let it be borne in mind, is not violated only by the transaction of the ordinary business of the world, or making arrangements for it, or by journeying; but no less so by social visits; by walks for pleasure and recreation; by light reading; by sleeping away its sacred hours. It is indeed a day of rest, but only from secular employments. God has kindly appointed it to attend to the high concerns of the soul, with more entire freedom from worldly cares. It seems to be too prevalent an opinion, at least, general practice would presume the existence of such an opinion, and

even settled belief, that only the time actually spent in the house of God is holy time. And with multitudes who are found regularly in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and not a few professed Christians, that is scarcely more than one hour of that day!

But to dwell no longer on this single mark of declining. The Israelites, notwithstanding they sought a city to dwell in, a place of worldly enjoyment, found none. But not limiting this fact to what was literally true in their case, it suggests what is no less true, as applied to Christians, that they can find no satisfying portion on earth. This world can afford no such possession. For every purpose of a fair experiment some have had enough of riches, enjoyed enough of honors, and tasted deep enough of pleasures, to make of this world a heaven, if heaven on earth could be formed. As the Psalmist expresses it: "They have more than heart could wish." They have no apprehension as to the validity and permanence of their titles to what they possess: for "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names." Of all these things, and of all that can be gathered or extracted from this world, the wisest man who ever lived, has pronounced all vanity and vexation of spirit. If it be true, as has been sometimes asserted, that the wicked would be willing to accept of what this world could afford, as their eternal portion, their choice is founded on an

entire ignorance of what heaven is, on an entire destitution of what qualifies one for the enjoyment of that world, or which is not less likely, on their reasonable apprehensions of what awaits them when called to leave this world. Expressed in few and plainer terms, it is a choice of this world as an eternal portion, in preference to a world of endless despair, or a reasonable dread of it.

But one thing is certain, namely, that the renewing grace of God has awakened desires in the soul which the possession of all this world could never satisfy. God alone can do this. And the more he is known and loved, the less are all things else desired. We often see a practical test of this truth in the entire contentment, and cheerful and even joyful resignation of the man of deep poverty and severe affliction, over one in different and opposite circumstances, though himself a Christian. St. Paul was an eminent example of this, who “gloried in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

With the individual who has been born again (to return to the particular point under consideration), however grievously he may sin, he can never have the same relish for any sinful pursuits or acts, as before his experience of that change. If he have, there is strong evidence of self-deception in the belief that he has passed from death unto life. His conscience can-

not be seared, nor its voice wholly silenced. This is what the Apostle John meant, when he wrote, "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." This does not mean that he is *perfect*. For he had just before said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Nor does it mean only, that he will not be left so to sin as finally to perish. But with this, it implies also the fact, that he that is born of God will never be left to sin with that *relish*, that satisfaction, as before. There will be a thorn concealed in every sinful pleasure.

Whatever may be the charms of this world to sinners, its glory will be obscured to the child of God. A world that sin has marred, and God on its account has cursed, can never afford real satisfaction to one on whom the Divine image has been reimpresed.

There is that in the new constitution of the Christian, which the gracious presence of God only can satisfy. He will, indeed, wander, but he cannot be happy in his wanderings. God will shoot his arrows at him, and the wounds will rankle, till he resorts to the Cross for renewed application of the Saviour's blood. Here is found a characteristic difference between a real Christian and a false professor. The false professor has never come out from the world, save by an empty profession. He has never lost his relish for the sinful pursuits and pleasures of the world. It is

not so with the individual who has been born again. Here is a decisive test and easily applied.

Let us now show God's dealings towards his people:

I. He withholds his judgments till his mercies prove unavailing. This is apparent to every careful examination of his conduct towards his ancient people; and there is, perhaps, no exception to this course of his treatment, either of individuals, of the Church, or indeed of nations. Blessings are first promised and bestowed, and *abused*, before judgments are sent. This is so evident, that I need not spend time to prove it. God himself has declared that "judgment is his strange work." This is so in two respects. It is *rare*, compared with the mercies and blessings bestowed: and never sent but from absolute necessity. He himself tells us, "He does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men." He tells us that he is *love*, that is his nature. And though justice is but a modification of his love, yet that is exercised in acts of punishment, of calamities and judgments, only when the direct exercise of his love fails to produce its proper and appropriate *effects*. This was the only reason why angels were banished from heaven. The only reason why the incorrigible and finally impenitent are sent to hell, or any of our race experience calamities and afflictions. Even in this most awful doom, God declares, with an oath, that he takes no pleasure. "As I live, saith the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his evil ways and live." And

in all the tenderness of the most impassioned entreaty cries, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Language similar to this is not uncommon in the Bible, as coming from the lips of Jehovah: "O, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?"—that is, consume them as those abandoned cities of the plain were consumed: "Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." And when their provocations had reached the utmost pitch of daring: "The Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the imaginations of their own heart; *therefore*, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink; and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them." In regard to individuals, their course, and God's conduct towards them, I refer you to the latter part of the first chapter of Proverbs.

But it should be borne in mind, that the Divine anger is in proportion to the intensity of the Divine love, when slighted and abused. No anguish, therefore, is so keen as when that love is turned to holy indignation. Hence, that most appalling description of the wretchedness of those whose condition is por-

trayed in the closing verses of the sixth chapter of Revelations: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of *his* wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" "Wrath of the Lamb!" terms most incongruous, and, apparently, contradictory. An emblem of all that is mild and gentle, and often applied to the Saviour; but all that mildness and gentleness giving place to all that is withering, crushing, and consuming!

II. There is a limit, beyond which the sins of God's people will not be suffered to go. When they reach that limit, he will interpose by severe judgments. This is true of individuals, of nations, and of his Church. Thus, of the Amorites of old, it was said: "Their iniquity is not yet full;" and they were still spared. So, also, our Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers,"—meaning those who killed the prophets. And this is seen in the whole history of God's dealings towards his ancient people. He bears long, but will not bear always. His own honor, and faithfulness to them, forbid it. The text furnishes an illustration: The Israelites were afflicted with hunger and thirst. We often find them suffering these and other severe calamities during their journeyings; but neither these nor other calamities were sent upon them till their murmurings and rebellion had reached the highest point of provocation. This is seen throughout their entire

history. These judgments were generally without instigation. Thousands, and even tens of thousands, were cut off from the land of the living by a sudden blow, either by pestilence or the direct hand of God. We are now, however, speaking of those who are really, and not by profession merely or external relation, the people of God; for false professors have no assurance of recovery from their wanderings, or state of distance from God, more than any other class of sinners. Indeed, the prospect is far less that they will ever be reclaimed. The severest judgments are usually *lost* upon them. In their case, God has not covenanted to make his judgments the means of bringing them to repentance; nor do they, in point of fact, generally have that effect. This is seen in all instances, perhaps without exception, where God has sent the desolating pestilence. Where have you ever known, not a revival of religion, in the common acceptance of that phrase, but even any special attention to the subject of religion, even where hundreds have been daily hurried into eternity, and for many weeks, and even months? We have yet to hear of the first instance, either of false professors in the Church, or of impenitent sinners out of it; and but too seldom of any proper effect being produced on the real children of God, when fallen into a state of deep slumber or deep declension. Hence, I remark:

III. That where judgments are sent on the true people of God for their sins, whatever those sins may

be, whether gross neglect of duty, or the commission of high offences, or too deep engagedness in the affairs of the world, whether of a public or of a private nature, those judgments will be continued, and in increasing severity, till a salutary effect is produced. God said to Samuel, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I will also make an end." What was thus threatened against, and executed upon, a single branch of his people, finds a general illustration in the history of his people as a body, in all ages of the Church. Where that history has been written with the pen of inspiration, I know not of a single exception. I need refer you only to those chapters of it, which record the forty years' journeyings of the Israelites through the wilderness. Mercies never follow judgments when once they are sent, until those judgments have produced the effect which they were intended to produce. This position also finds an evidence and an illustration of its truth in the experience of individual Christians. Take the case of a child of God under the more ordinary afflictions of bereavement of near and dear relatives. We do not, indeed, class these under the head of Divine judgments. Usually, they are not so. Nor are they sent in anger, but often with a view to the higher improvement of those who are thus afflicted. Yet when this effect is

not produced, God will not lift his heavy hand from the sufferer; but increase its weight by actually sending, or fearfully threatening still heavier blows, till murmurings have ceased, and given place to uncomplaining and cordial submission. And this will be the effect on every real Christian, after the first paroxysms of grief are over, and the mind is settled down to a state of calm and sober reflection. Where this is not the result, but it is left for time, or deeper and more engrossing engagements in the business or pleasures of the world to wear off, or banish one's sorrows, the evidence is strong that he has no well-founded title to the character of a real Christian. And this will soon be seen, as generally it is seen, in deeper hardness, and moral insensibility. Neither judgments nor any kind of afflictions are ever sent in vain, that is, without producing some effect. If the effect is not salutary, it will be injurious. If the heart is not softened, it will be hardened. St. Paul, speaking of the Gospel, as preached by him, utters a universal truth, when he says, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that are lost. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life." Peter too, speaking of Christ, as the sum and substance of the Gospel, uttered the same solemn truth, when he said, "Unto you which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone

of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed." But

IV. There is another truth, of no less extensive application in the same circumstances, as in the case of the distressed Israelites, namely, that when "they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, he delivered them out of their distresses." And what truth more cheering than this? Here too is seen the benevolence of God in his dealings towards his creatures. And we may add, in nothing is more clearly seen human depravity in all its depth and blackness! God would win men to his favor and to everlasting happiness by his goodness and mercies. But when these fail to produce their legitimate effects, instead of abandoning them to endless ruin, he still holds them back; hedges up the way of his own people, but for which they would rush on to perdition, as well as usually arrests and reclaims sinners by the same process. And as he led forth the children of Israel by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation, so he leads his people now, by the only effectual means, to heaven, the city of the redeemed and glorified.

It is the right way, because it is the only effectual way. Left to himself, and not a Christian would ever reach the kingdom of heaven. He would turn his back at its very door, did he stand on its threshold. Rather, he would never make any approach to that

world. Such is the human heart, even when partially sanctified.

The practical lessons suggested by this discourse are so obvious, they scarcely require a distinct statement. I will, however, state a few of them.

1. They furnish a test of Christian character. Few of us have been exempt from trials more or less severe, and some drunken deeply of the cup of sorrow. Their effects furnish the test to which I allude. The inquiry of each of us who profess to be the children of God is, what have those effects been?

2. It is a question, certainly, of no less interest or pertinence, how the vows we voluntarily assumed on the public consecration of ourselves to Jehovah have been kept: whether, in the sense intended, and then solemnly expressed, we "came out from the world," and have since "kept ourselves unspotted from the world;" and what, in all these respects, is our present position? And let it be borne in mind, that an unwillingness or neglect actually to make this inquiry, with a sincere and earnest desire to ascertain this point, is itself proof that it will not bear examination.

3. Another point of inquiry is, whether we can reasonably expect God's blessing, or still more reasonably apprehend his frowns and judgments. Those judgments are extensively abroad in the land, and if the distant sound of them do not arouse and reclaim us from our slumbers and wanderings from God, then, when they shall actually come, we may expect no

mitigation. For when he begins he will also make an end, and that end will be fearfully desolating. The great principles of the Divine government are the same in every age. They are unvarying. Like conduct on the part of his people will be met with like conduct on his part.

Finally. It is a point of deep and solemn inquiry with all who are yet uninterested in the salvation of Christ, whether God's mercies have, through their abuse of them, become so far exhausted as to be followed by his judgments. We have seen that, ordinarily, at least, there is such a point in God's treatment towards them. He would first win sinners by his mercy. Judgment is his strange work, and is not sent till mercy fails to produce its proper effect. But even this is not the most alarming consideration. For God often sends his judgments as the first and only effectual means of awakening sinners to a sense of their condition, and thus drive them to the Saviour. The most hopeless of all conditions is that of utter unconcern: when neither the wooing love, nor the threatened wrath of Jehovah affects them. When unmoved they can hear the thunders of Sinai, and the melting accents of Calvary. When that point is reached, then is it that they are given over to judicial blindness of mind and hardness of heart. Whether any among us have reached that state, to remain in his unconcernedness till aroused to all the awful realities of endless perdition, a short time at longest will decide.

XVI.

DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

“I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”—Acts 8 : 23.

THESE words were addressed by the Apostle Peter to Simon Magus, or Simon the Sorcerer, who is represented in this chapter as exerting a very powerful influence over the public mind, by his magical performances. On the preaching of Philip to the inhabitants of Samaria, multitudes of whom were savingly converted, this individual also professed his belief of the Gospel, and was baptized; and beholding the miracles and signs which were done, became deeply interested, whether sincerely, or pretendedly, is not expressly stated, although the result soon showed, not only his great ignorance of the Christian religion, but the deep corruption of his heart. Philip, though endowed with the power of working miracles, had neither the gift of discerning spirits, nor the power of conferring the Holy Spirit in his extraordinary operations, which was communicated only to and by the Apostles. They, hearing of the work of grace in

Samaria, sent Peter and John thither; “who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostles’ hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

In this closing sentence, which I have selected as my text, there are suggested the two following general topics.

I. The wretched state of the human heart by nature. And

II. The great difficulty of deliverance from that state.

It will be my object to show and illustrate these two facts.

I. The wretched state of the human heart by nature.

The text, it is true, was directly applied to Simon,

whose condition had been previously described, as above briefly stated. We do not present him as a fair example of all who are in a state of nature. Although there are many who have surpassed even him, as men judge of comparative guilt, and probably in the judgment of heaven. Allowance may be made for gross ignorance. We have little or no certain knowledge of him beyond what is related of him in this chapter; and we are not authorized to go beyond this record. It was indeed a daring presumption, and even a species of blasphemy, to attempt to purchase the power of the Holy Ghost to work miracles. This in no small degree may be ascribed to his ignorance; and upon the reproof which he received from the Apostle, he manifested some sensibility of conscience, though it may be ascribed to a wrong motive: "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." What those things were we are not told, more than that his wickedness was great; that he had no part nor lot in this matter, that is, in the salvation of the Gospel; and that his heart was not right in the sight of God. Probably, also, he recalled the preaching of Philip on the denunciations of God's displeasure and wrath against impenitent sinners in the future world. But the truth is, that his case is only a fuller development of certain traits or principles which may be inherent in every unsanctified heart, and which lie dormant, only because circumstances are not favorable to call

them forth : that it is only the manifestation of one phase of the natural heart, and no worse in the sight of the heart-searching God than he sees in every impenitent sinner. With God the heart is the man, though different degrees of guilt may attach to different actions, not because they are more displeasing to God, but because of more injurious consequences to others. There are numerous offences, in regard to the comparative guilt of which, it is not easy for man to decide, whether limited in their consequences to the offender himself, or extending to others : or even between the two classes of private and public offences. What greater offence than to tread under foot the Son of God, and put him to open shame, and count the blood wherewith he is sanctified an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace !

But the consequences of this are one's own. He that does this, sins against his own soul. And the Apostle Paul charges the guilt of all this upon those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation, when offered to them. Did the sin of Simon Magus exceed this ? He, indeed, acted out his sin, while the sin of rejecting Christ may be confined to the heart. Ah, how many sin thus quietly ! Overt action is not essential to the deepest hostility. If restraints are thrown around one which prevent a public outbreak, the real crime may be the same in the sight of God. Our Saviour has designated heart-sins by the same terms as the sins of life : see examples of it in the fifth chap-

ter of Matthew. Because the blow of the murderer is interrupted, or his intended victim eludes it, is he not a murderer in the view of heaven?

Again, selfishness is the essence of all sin. It is the worst kind of idolatry. It is in all its aspects directly opposed to God in his whole nature, character, and authority. It shows itself in a variety of ways, according to the ruling passions of men: it is more obvious in some than in others. But the form of it is of little consequence in the sight of God. In this consisted the essence of Simon's sin. Even if we ascribe to him the worst motives, their whole force and power over him originated in his ambition and avarice. He had lost his influence among the people, by the preaching of Philip; his reputation as "the mighty power of God," as they had regarded him, was gone, and the hope of gain was gone with it. It was natural to wish to regain his former standing. Suppose him a consummate hypocrite, and which certainly does not appear from the narrative itself, might not the same thing have been true of any other impenitent man, placed in his circumstances? Is not then his case a fair example of what the unsanctified heart of any other man is capable of? O, how often has the religion of Jesus Christ been prostituted to the vilest purposes, been the covering of deep and dark iniquities, and made the means of accomplishing ends which were purely selfish! Because human nature is acted out, it is no worse than God sees it in the unsanctified heart.

But let us leave the developments of human nature in its unsanctified state, as it is manifested by individuals, and see how God has described it in his holy word. And I remark,

I. That the most appalling description which is given of human nature is, not as it is exhibited by individuals, but as a mass. Individuals are never referred to, except as illustrating certain traits or properties of it. This, I think, might readily be shown on an examination of each case, as we have already seen in the one before us. Listen, then, to the following inspired declarations, which I have selected from the Bible as mere specimens: "God looked down from heaven upon the children of *men*, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that seek God. Every one of them is gone back, they all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good; no, not one." "He fashioneth their hearts alike." "As in water, face answereth face, so the heart of man to man." "What is man, that he should be clean!" "The wicked are estranged from the womb." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "And we are by nature the children of wrath." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." "So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they

are spiritually discerned." "Dead in trespasses and sins." "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." "Haters of God." "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." To these might be added unnumbered passages, of precisely the same import, all of which are descriptive of human nature, as a mass; as it universally exists in the human family; as it respects every individual of our race, unsanctified by the grace of God. And can more decisive language be employed to express the entireness of the moral depravity of human nature?

It does not, indeed, follow from this, that *all* are equally *guilty*; but it does prove the *universality* of human depravity, not only as to the entire race, but as to every moral attribute of each individual of it. Hence,

2. Every moral excellence, every quality or property which enters into the character of a child of God, or a real Christian, is expressly *denied* to all, in their natural state. They have not the love of God in them; they have no true faith in Christ; their sorrow for sin, where it exists at all, is the sorrow of the world, which leads to death; they are without God in the world; they have no discernment of spiritual things, no spirit of true obedience; they mind not spiritual things; they walk not after the spirit, but after the flesh. Now, all

these *negations* are repeatedly applied to those who are in a state of nature; and various other forms of expression, which I need not recite, which deny each and all those properties to every natural man, or every human being as he comes into the world, or shows a moral character, are often so employed and applied in the Scriptures. They are not applied to individuals of a peculiar grade of wickedness, to the vilest sort, though sometimes more particularly to such, to illustrate certain characteristics, but they are descriptive of human nature as a mass—of *all* mankind in their natural state.

3. The same point is established by the fact, that where any of those exercises which are denied to the impenitent, or of which they are destitute—such as love to God, repentance of sin, faith in Christ, and true obedience—are experienced and manifested, in any degree, the individual who is the subject of them is a child of God, is a true disciple of Christ, is a new creature, has been regenerated—in a word, is a Christian. No one can doubt that these exercises are experienced, these fruits of the Spirit are enjoyed and manifested by different Christians, in different degrees. The love of God is stronger, more intense, in some than in others, evidenced by corresponding acts and conduct, as in our Saviour's remarks respecting the female who washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with precious ointment. See another example

of a certain creditor, who had two debtors, in the same chapter (Luke 7). Some, also, have stronger faith and deeper repentance, evidenced by a more careful avoidance of even the appearance of evil, and more active devotedness. And this is true of every Christian grace. But it is the *nature* of these exercises, and not the *degree* of them, that decides the fact of the new birth—that constitutes one a Christian.

Our present point is not, what constitutes these exercises, but the fact that their existence in any degree proves regeneration. If this be so, then previously to that act of sovereign grace, there is no holiness or moral goodness in mankind. I remark,

4. There is that in the natural heart which, in the removal of all restraints and the presentation of adapted motives, is capable of any sin or crime that the sinner can commit. This may seem a hard, and even unjust charge. But how can such a conclusion be avoided, if the description which God has given of fallen human nature, as a mass, as we have seen from the declarations of his word, and some of them from his own lips, be a just description? If it be true that “the carnal mind” (and by carnal is simply meant *natural* mind or heart), “is enmity against God;” if “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, even to madness;” and if it be true that “all hearts are fashioned alike, and as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man,”—to requote but a few of the passages already recited, and those a mere speci-

men of what the Bible contains,—I repeat the question, How can the statement here made be gainsaid? There is no point in regard to which mankind generally err more egregiously than in the estimate or judgment which they form of human nature in its unsanctified state, even with those who profess to believe its total depravity. The truth is, they do not see it as God sees it, nor as the redeemed in heaven see it, nor as lost spirits see and know it. Men this side of those worlds, see it under a thousand restraints—restraints imposed by education, society, human authority, self-interest; others, by providential acts, and various other causes and influences, which will readily suggest themselves to you. It is these restraints and influences, and not a purer or better original nature, which accounts for such differences as are observed among different members of society. To these, the amiability of the amiable, the morality of the moral, is to be ascribed. Mere morality has respect only to human conduct, to what is external or outward. And I scarcely need say that *that* furnishes a very imperfect and uncertain test of the real state of the heart.

How often, alas, is a solemn profession of religion, prostituted as a covering to conceal a corrupt state of the heart, and even to prevent suspicion of the grossest vices committed in secret? Strip off these coverings—relieve from these restraints—let the heart be exposed in its own native state, and seen as Omniscience sees it, how think you would it then appear, even to

one's self as well as to others? The restraints which are imposed on the natural heart, and which prevent the outbreaking of its depravity, alters not its real state. The heart of Simon Magus was the same in the sight of God, after the solemn profession of his faith, and receiving baptism as an outward token of its sincerity, as it was before. It was equally true of him, at those different periods, that he had no part nor lot in the matter, *i. e.* of salvation. Equally true that his heart was not right in the sight of God, and equally true before, as after his exposure, that he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." But the adapted, the governing, the all-powerful motive to bring out his heart had not been presented, till the moment Peter uttered those denunciations against him. Not till then, had Peter the evidence of his true condition: nor till then, did he "perceive that he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." Till then, Peter had been deceived in respect to his condition, and the probability is, that Simon himself was deceived. There is no evidence that he intended to impose on Philip and Peter, when he professed his belief in the truths which he had heard, and was baptized. That he had, for a little season, abandoned his course of life, and professed a change of views and feelings, changed not, altered not his heart. It only showed itself. And does his case, in its main features, stand alone in our world? No other man may ever have been guilty of

attempting to purchase with money, the power of the Holy Ghost, to perform miracles.

But that, I apprehend, is not the greatest crime ever committed, daring as that was. It surely does not surpass the actually claiming the exercise of that Divine prerogative, in working miracles, and thus imposing on millions to their eternal destruction, but which was not true in the case of Simon. But suppose the worst; consider him a consummate hypocrite; ascribe to him the worst motives that have been ascribed to him, which were, under the cover and cloak of religion, to regain his lost influence over the people, by which he bewitched, more properly astonished them, and thereby amass wealth,—in a word, his ambition and avarice; is that a strange thing in this wicked world? Have not the same principles or passions existed and operated, to an equal degree? Have there been no hypocrites since his day? While there have been, and still are the same passions controlling men, and to an equal degree as in the case of Simon, are there not other passions equally vile in God's sight, and even more degrading in man's estimation, and which are cherished and gratified, and that too under the very garb of the Christian profession, as a disguise? Are ambition and avarice greater offences than these?

God said, by his prophet Jeremiah (3d chap.), to a whole nation, and by no means the worst portion of the human family, "Behold, thou hast spoken and

done evil things, as thou couldst." This does not mean that they committed all the crimes of which they were capable. But that they sinned as they were able, under the restraints, and checks, and guards, which God in his sovereign mercy threw around them. Elsewhere he tells us, he restrains the wrath of man. And is that any proof of the innocence of those whom he thus restrains, or that they are by nature less depraved, than those from whom all restraints are withheld, and who are left to act out their depravity? Ay, thanks to his name, for his restraining hand! Were it withheld, the most amiable and moral would become fiends, and this whole world a precinct of the world of endless woe!

There is one argument more, farther to show God's view and judgment of all the unsanctified as a body, which should not be omitted, viz. : He has made but one world where all the finally impenitent will mingle together, and dwell forever. Whatever difference there may be in degrees of guilt, whatever difference in actual suffering, there will be none as to the place or world in which their sufferings will be endured. There will be none as to the duration of their sufferings. That world is not divided into separate and different apartments. It is everywhere spoken of as the same place—and their punishment declared to be eternal. Read the sentence of the final Judge, as he himself will pronounce it, recorded in the twenty-fifth of Matthew, and then turn to

the last chapter but one in this inspired volume, and at the eighth verse, and see who are to be the eternal inmates of that place of woe! There, every restraint will be taken off—every heart act itself out. Human nature, as it is, is there seen. Not indeed in its present power to injure others—though the lost be mutual tormentors of one another. Who, think you, can there distinguish between the hearts of those wretched beings, however they may have apparently, and in our view, differed in this world? And again, think you that that world will contain none who here enjoyed the reputation of strict morality and even amiability? To what place must those go, who, discarding the Son of God as the only “name given under heaven among men whereby they can be saved,” have depended, some of them, on the indiscriminate mercy of God; others, like the young nobleman, on their exemption from the grosser vices; others on their own morality, and other expedients, while utterly regardless of the salvation the Gospel proclaims? Where must those forever dwell, those amiable lovers of pleasure more than of God, who die thus? None of these classes, living and dying thus, have a single qualification for heaven, and the gates of that holy and happy place will be forever barred against them. Where in eternity, and in all the regions of space, have we any knowledge or hint of more than one other place, where those who are excluded from heaven, must forever dwell? No,

there is but one other place. And is God unjust in sending the most amiable but impenitent sinner to the same place as him who has thrown up the reins on all the vile passions of his depraved nature, and only sought their gratification?

Ah, he who searches and looks upon the heart, and judges, not according to the outward appearance, sees but little difference in human, natural hearts; and the same place is the fit abode for them all. Sure I am that the amiable part of my audience who yet reject the offer of eternal life, think seldom or never of these things. Nothing farther need be said to show the wretched state of the human heart by nature. And I proceed to consider the other general topic.

II. The great difficulty of deliverance, or more properly, of actually being delivered, from that state, "I perceive that thou art in the bond of iniquity." There is no stronger bond than this, "the bond of iniquity," though it be a silken cord. But let us inquire in what its great strength consists. This will show the difficulty of deliverance from the bondage to which it subjects.

1. It is the natural state of man. However men may speculate on the subject, whatever philosophy or theory they may adopt to explain the fact, or whether it explains it or not, a fact it is that human nature is totally depraved—depraved since the fall of the first human pair, in its very sources. The

Scriptures already quoted, and they might be greatly multiplied, show corruption at the fountain head.

Whether we can tell the period, or the first instant of actual sin or not, the first moral exercise, and all succeeding moral exercises are sinful, unless, and until the heart is changed by sovereign grace, and there is a previous foundation for a result so uniform and so universal, and that foundation is the entire corruption of the whole mass of human nature. There never has been an exception since the fall, save the pure and spotless Babe of Bethlehem. Any philosophy devised to show the contrary is a philosophy falsely so called. As is the fountain, so are its streams—and every stream has shown that fountain corrupt. But let us look at human nature a step in advance from its mere origin, to a state of *individual responsibility*; and I remark,

2. That every sinful act is altogether voluntary. Men sin from choice. An action which is *compelled* is not a sinful action, however injurious it might be in its consequences. The performer of it is only an instrument in the hand of another, who is the real and responsible agent, both in the judgment of God and of one's own conscience. But with the nature of sin we have nothing to do, in the present discourse, but of its power and dominion over men, by which they are held in bondage. And what bondage so strong and absolute as a willing bondage, a cherished bondage? To sin, falls in with the whole moral nature of man. It is

itself his moral nature. This is God's own account : "God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

This is a description of the moral nature of man. So far as the actions of the physical man are of a moral nature, they are only sin. Hence we are told that "the ploughing of the wicked is sin, and the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord."

To show farther the predominant and all-dominant power of sin in the unrenewed sinner, let it be remarked, that it is in direct opposition to both his reason and his conscience, when allowed to speak. In every case where the question of sin, or in regard to any desire, purpose, word, or act, the question arises, whether it is sinful or not—both reason and conscience are on the side of God and his law. Sin is, therefore, the violation of both these faculties, as well as of the Divine law. Conscience, indeed, is the law of God to those who have not his written word. "For when the Gentiles (says Paul), which have not the law (*i. e.*, God's written law), do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the (written) law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing."

I ask, then, what can be stronger than that tide of the whole moral nature of man, which in every movement of it is in direct opposition to his own reason, his conscience, and his Maker? What stronger *bond* than that which sin fabricates? Is the language which Peter applied to Simon, too strong when applied to every unrenewed sinner,—“Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?”

But once more. Let us advance, now, from the period of individual responsibility to the onward course of the impenitent sinner. What was first chosen, loved, and cherished, for its own sake, is still chosen, loved, and cherished, with increased avidity, till another power is superinduced; that of habit. The stream, as it first proceeds from a corrupt fountain, carrying with it all its own deleterious properties, to and through what I have termed the first stage of individual responsibility, soon divides itself into numerous branches, down which different individuals take their different directions, either from an impulse of nature, or the force of circumstances. Hence the various objects of supreme desire, and supreme pursuit. These desires gather strength from the fact, that all things are made to contribute to the accomplishment or attainment of those objects. Hence avarice, or an inordinate desire of the riches of the world; hence ambition, the coveting of the honors of the world; and hence the numerous forms of the pleasures of the world. What is simply supreme, or holds the place of preference over

all other objects, soon becomes all-absorbing. Hence the force or power of habit, which has been termed a *second nature*. How strong this twofold bond becomes, hear the Prophet Jeremiah: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye learn to do well that are accustomed to do evil." Hear a greater than a prophet: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" And the Apostle Paul classes the "*lovers of pleasure*, more (or rather), than lovers of God," among the most hopeless of our race.

But without limiting our remarks to any particular department or course of sin, "the gall of bitterness" is increasing, and the "bond of iniquity" tightening, every hour of continued impenitence. The heart must necessarily grow harder, and the conscience less tender and faithful, the longer sin, in any of its thousand forms, is indulged.

Our present discourse suggests, among many others, the following reflections.

1. How immeasurably below a proper estimate of the nature and demerit of sin, do our views of it fall? What mortal has but slight conceptions of his own guilt? Short of absolutely despairing of the mercy of God, it is not possible to have too abasing views of ourselves. On this subject there can be no exaggera-

tion. The picture of the human heart cannot be painted in colors too dark. God has said, sin is "the thing which his soul hateth." Yes, he hates it with all the energy, all the strength of his own infinite nature. It is the only thing that he does hate—the only thing he does not love; regarded as distinct and separate from the beings who commit it. What slight conceptions we have of the great doctrine which stands out in dreadful prominence on every page of the inspired Book,—the entire depravity of the human heart! Its nature, its workings, its terrible effects are seen recorded everywhere; from over the gateway of the abandoned and desolated garden of Eden; in the clouds which poured their inundating floods over the whole earth; in characters of consuming lightnings over the cities of the plain; but, above all, over the Cross on Calvary, when the beloved Son of God expired! The pit of eternal despair shows not the malignity, the cruelty, the awful effects of sin, and God's displeasure at it, as it was exhibited in that scene. And but for God's restraining power, earth were now a hell, and all its inhabitants fit companions of fallen angels. Who can wonder that he should make its punishment eternal!

2. How wonderful the mercy of God, which has interposed in behalf of such a race; that did not suffer the plainest justice to take its course; that lifted the curse of his violated law from the head of the guilty offender, and laid it with all its crushing weight on the innocent head of his beloved Son! Yes, that

infinitely beloved Son must leave the bosom of his Father, become a man of sorrows, and die like the vilest malefactor on the Roman cross! All this, or not one sin could be pardoned; not a child of Adam could be saved. "God so loved the world"—ah, who understands the full force of that little word "*so*," "*so loved!*" None but He in whose heart it beat. It is the fit theme of endless anthems from the tongues of all the redeemed of our race. But, alas, how faintly sung on earth! What cause, brethren, have we for the deepest humiliation and self-loathing, and for sending up from that posture, adoring thanks to Him who, notwithstanding all our unworthiness, bears with us, and permits us to hope eternal life?

3. The hope that another sinner among us, or elsewhere, will be brought to repentance, rests alone on the sovereign mercy of God. This is as true of the most amiable, as of the most hardened transgressor. For there is, in every human being, a heart which omnipotent grace alone can subdue.

No child of God ever made himself so; ever originated his own new birth—ever caused his own new creation. Our Saviour expressly said of all who become the sons of God, that they "are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The Spirit of God breathes the breath of spiritual and eternal life into the souls of the dead in trespasses and sins,—not less certainly than he breathed the breath of life into the lifeless

form of Adam's dust, when he became a living soul, in every instance of a spiritual resurrection.

It must be so, if the natural heart is what it has been shown to be. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God—neither, indeed, can be." No, enmity *cannot* originate love. The difficulty is altogether of a moral nature,—the opposition of the heart, the bondage of iniquity, the supreme love of sin; and if this does not cover the sinner himself with the deepest guilt, then there is no sin, no guilt in all God's universe. His sovereign, omnipotent grace, is the sinner's only ground of hope, his only remedy. And, let me add,

Lastly. That to *feel* this—to feel one's utterly lost, self-ruined condition—is the sinner's only safety. To be utterly cut off from all hope in and of one's self, is the first motion towards casting one's self on Jesus Christ. It is the proper office of *reason* to discover danger; and it always does this, when this life is exposed to peril or danger: and it often requires but an instant to make the discovery; and where safety depends at all on one's own effort, that effort is instantly made. And cannot the sinner do as much as this when his soul is in peril, and all that is required as a first step, and that a step of absolute safety, is to throw himself into the arms of the Omnipotent Saviour,—those arms outstretched to receive him? If, through the fixed opposition of his heart, he cannot make it a *new heart*, can he not ask the Saviour to do it? His

reason, if he believes God's word, tells him, that as he is, he must perish; and both reason and conscience tell him, in spite of all his self-love and endeavors to believe the contrary, that as he is, he *deserves* to perish. And with all this light, and under this united conviction of reason and conscience, can he not ask, and earnestly ask, the omnipotent and infinitely merciful Saviour, to take the great work of his salvation into His own hands? Let the sinner do this, and commit the mighty work of his salvation to His hands, who gives the assurance of His own word, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

XVII.

THE ETERNAL DWELLING-PLACE OF EVERY SOUL

IS ADAPTED TO ITS MORAL CHARACTER.

“That he might go to his own place.”—ACTS 1 : 25.

THE individual whose final destiny is here declared was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Lord and Master; and as applied to him, the words unquestionably denote the place of eternal misery. Judas was guilty of a crime which, in point of enormity, was never equalled by that of any other being. If the murder of a fellow-being stands at the head of crimes on the criminal list of human governments, and cries to heaven for vengeance on the perpetrator of it, what guilt must be attached to him who betrayed and delivered to crucifixion the Saviour of the world, the Lord of life and glory! Against the man who should do this, the Son of God himself had denounced a most fearful woe: “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been better if that man had not been born, or that a millstone were hanged about his neck,

and he were buried in the depth of the sea." That the expressions, "his own place," apply to Judas, is obvious from the connection in which they stand in the whole context: "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two" (that is, Barsabas or Matthias) "thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas, by transgression, fell, that he might go to his own place." The grammatical and obvious construction of the passage applies the words to Judas, and they could in no proper sense refer to Matthias, until, at least, he had been designated, by the lot which was cast, to fill the place which had been vacated in the apostleship by the death of Judas, and that lot was not cast till *after* this declaration was made.

The design of those who place this strained and unnatural construction on the text, is to show that the words "his own place" do not relate to eternity, but to office, to place in the apostleship, and therefore decide nothing in relation to the eternal condition of Judas; for if they do refer to Judas, as he was already dead, they must necessarily refer to him in eternity: and no one could ever imagine that by "his own place," heaven was intended. Covered with all the dreadful guilt of having caused the Saviour's death, and of taking his own life, he rushes into eternity, and sinks into the pit of damned spirits. His character fitted him for that place: it was "his own place."

But if this was true of Judas, it is equally true of every sinner who leaves the world impenitent. Nor is it less true of Christians than of sinners, that when they die they also go to their own place. Their places of final and eternal destination are indeed widely different; as different as heaven from hell. But they are fitted for those different places. The sentiment, therefore, which we derive from the text is this: The moral character and the eternal dwelling-place of every one of our race, are fitted or adapted to each other. It is fit and right that Christians at death should go to heaven. And it is fit and right that sinners at death should go to hell.

My object in this discourse will be to establish and illustrate the truth of these positions. And

1. The general course of the Divine administration in this world, in relation to these different classes and characters, furnishes evidence of no little weight. God's providences have afforded striking marks of discrimination between them. It was exhibited in the case of Noah and his family, in whom alone any piety was found in the old world, and all the rest were utterly destroyed by the flood. The same discrimination was manifested in the destruction of the cities of the plain, when Lot and some of his family were rescued, and the rest consumed by fire from heaven. Just previously to this awful judgment, and with direct reference to it, this principle in the government of God was expressly recognized, in the interview and con-

ference which Abraham was privileged to hold with Jehovah himself. "And Jehovah said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not I will know. And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And, without quoting farther examples, I may refer you, with entire confidence, to the whole history of God's dealings towards our world, for the truth of this position in relation to the general administration of his government. In this qualified sense, this is true of nations and of individuals. While "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,"—"the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." "I know that it shall be well with them that fear God,—but it shall not be well with the wicked." This is the great principle in the administration of God's government over this world. True, there are many exceptions, and we find them stated in close connection with the principle above laid down, and which our own observation will abundantly prove. Thus we read in words immediately following those last quoted: "There is a vanity

which is done upon the earth ; that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked. Again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." These exceptions, however, only establish the general principle, while these exceptions are limited to this life. Beside, they are often more apparent than real. The sorest calamities are often mercies in disguise, while the favors of Providence often conceal the heaviest judgments. It was thus with those two different individuals, whose cases are stated as, perhaps, the widest extremes ever experienced on earth, to show this very fact,—I mean Lazarus and the rich man ; of the former of whom it is said, he here had his evil things ; and of the latter, he had in this world his good things. They were thus fitted for still wider, but reversed extremes in eternity. Nor was there any violation of the great fundamental principle of right and justice in either of those cases ; nor is there in those of any other subjects of God's moral government.

There is not a principle or truth more frequently asserted in all the word of God, nor one, perhaps, more clearly manifested by his providences, than the holy rectitude of his administration. We have but exceedingly limited and imperfect, and often most mistaken conceptions of it. Many of the ways of God are involved in obscurity and utter darkness—they are unfathomable mysteries. David expressed the absolute

perfection of the one, and the impenetrable obscurity of the other, when he exclaimed, "Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation (or establishment) of his throne." We must wait for the light of eternity to clear up all the difficulties, which to us are so great, mysterious, and often overwhelming; when that which we know not now, we shall know hereafter. I remark,

2. That this view of the subject is sustained by numerous promises and threatenings of God, scattered everywhere throughout his word. These are so numerous, they meet the eye so constantly, as it falls on almost every page of the sacred volume, both in regard to nations and individuals, that I need not take up your time by giving even a specimen of them.

3. Express declarations of God's word show that the whole of his administration over this world is ordered with direct reference to the eternal destiny of all its inhabitants. A state of probation has been granted for no other purpose. The sun continues to rise and set, seasons to revolve, and generations of men to succeed one another, with this view only. And when the last generation shall have come, and have become fitted for their eternal state, this world will be brought to a close. With this view God proclaims his mercy, and utters forth his wrath, grants space for repentance to any, and continues all till prepared for their final unchangeable state: for this depends not on number of years, or any particular term or duration of time. He

takes none till fitted for an unalterable, endless state, happy or miserable.

This is the object of all the means of grace which God has appointed; all the talents which he has committed to men, accompanied with the charge to occupy till he come and call them to an account. It is the object of the judgment itself, when he will give to every one according as his work shall be; and the whole account of the scenes of that day is closed with the solemn declaration, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

One sentence, however, directly to this point, must settle the question. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, filled to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory."

A second general argument may be drawn from the difference of views and feelings and conduct which characterize the righteous and the wicked, and distinguish them from each other; and which show their adaptedness to, and fitness for, widely different states and conditions in eternity; the one for a world of glory, the other for a world of misery.

This is true of saints in heaven not only, or those who have already passed to the world of woe, but it is true of those of these different classes, in this world.

Nor should the line be drawn between those who profess, and those who do not profess to be Christians, as indicating the proper division. For in all cases, surely, this would not be correct. We speak of true Christians, those who really bear the image of Christ, and those who are destitute of it. There is that in each which fits him for a widely different eternal destiny—the one for a world of holiness, the other for a world of misery. If heaven is a place of holiness, and Christians entertain views, possess feelings, and have formed habits which adapt them to a state of holiness, is it not right and fit that they should be received to heaven? Is not heaven their own place? We know, indeed, that God has promised this, and Christians may, with unwavering confidence, rely on his promise. But there is in the very nature of the case, a manifest propriety and fitness in rewarding them with eternal life, although the reward is all of grace. God only rewards what his grace alone produced.

Indeed, is there not happiness, pure and exalted, in proportion to one's conformity to the character of God? Does not holiness necessarily produce happiness? Can a holy being be otherwise than happy? As low and imperfect as the holy exercises of Christians are, in their present state, it is the source of all the real happiness they know. Nothing but sin can be a cause of misery.

On the other hand, where, I ask, is it fit and proper, not to say just merely, that those who possess no

congeniality of feeling—no conformity of heart to God—no taste for the employments of heaven, should spend their eternity? Should they also dwell forever in heaven? Is not their own place a widely different one? Are they not fitted to destruction; not by any arbitrary act of their Maker, but by their own choice—their own voluntary course of life? Are they not preparing themselves to lie down in everlasting sorrows? Does it require anything out of themselves to produce misery? Do not their own bosoms contain the worm that never dies, and material to feed the fire which cannot be quenched? Let them only be deprived of their idols, and death forever destroys every idol, and they could not but be miserable in any part of God's dominions. Heaven itself, if admitted there, were a hell. Every object which heaven contains would occasion agonies. Every song of the redeemed would grate upon their ears, and the ineffable glories of God and of the Lamb awaken their bitterest enmity. Ah, hell with all its torments is the impenitent sinner's own place. And if he die impenitent, for that alone will he be fitted.

But let us take a closer inspection of these different characters, and particularly notice some of the distinguishing characteristics of each as taught us in the Scriptures. And

1. Christians love God supremely. This is the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is not merely what is right, what the infinite perfections and moral excellence of Jehovah deserve, and entitle him to, but what is essential to salvation. It was the Saviour's answer to one who put to him the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Supreme love to God is one of the first and most distinguishing affections of the new-born soul. In this eminently consists the restored Divine image. Where, then, is it fit that those who love God thus should go after death, but to the glorious object of their supreme affection, whose image they bear—whose character they resemble?

But the impenitent are destitute of this affection, and therefore wholly unlike God. They are represented as not having the love of God in them—as lovers of themselves more than of God—as loving the creature more, or rather than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore. Where, then, is it fit, as well as just, that they should go at death? What, in the language of the text, is their own place? What destiny is meet and proper for them?

2. Christians habitually consult the pleasure of God, as the only proper standard of moral conduct. They study to know his will, that they may conform to it. The very first question they put on their conversion to him, or which rises in their hearts, is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And as

they know, they obey—imperfectly indeed. But this is their aim, and becomes their habit. They obey from the heart. Their highest happiness springs from obedience, hearty and cheerful. So far from being constrained or reluctant, their greatest self-sacrifices afford them their highest satisfaction and pleasure. And these they make, not with a view to a large remuneration as their chief motive. Not as painful penances or purchases;—they bring their own reward with them. Not to obtain heaven on the ground of any merit, but from love of obedience. Love of God is the prompting impulse. Now, where ought such to go when called away from earth? Ought—not on the score of any claim in, and of themselves, but on the ground of propriety, of fitness? Where, but heaven? To what other place is their moral character adapted? To what other objects and employments than such as heaven affords, have their moral tastes and habits been formed? Such a being could not be otherwise than happy in any part of God's universe.

But the impenitent have no such aims—have formed no such habits—have cultivated no such tastes—have no such desires—derive their happiness from no such sources. Without any reference to different classes of sinners (for there are different classes of them, and different degrees of active depravity among different individuals), the Bible uses the following language respecting them: “The wicked,

through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts"—meaning, they have no proper regard for God. "Depart from me; for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "We will not have this man to reign over us." "Away with him." Would there be any benevolence even in placing them where they must forever live under the full display of the perfections of the Being towards whom they have such feelings?

I might state many other properties which distinguish Christians from impenitent sinners. It would be manifest from everything which tends to form a character for eternity, or make up the account to be rendered at the final judgment. But enough has been stated, I think; to establish and illustrate the point which has been before us; and the honest judgment of every individual present must, I think, concede its truth. We cheerfully make the appeal to you all. Judge for yourselves.

Our discourse suggests several reflections, which, in themselves at least, are of no ordinary interest, and demand our most serious attention. And

1. God saves all whom, in the nature of things, it is possible to save. He receives every soul to heaven at death, who possesses any qualifications, down to that moment, for that world, and to whom it were any favor to admit there. Those whom he excludes from heaven could not be happy if admitted to heaven. They are fitted to none of its employments; their love

and practice of sin through life have utterly disqualified them for all that heaven affords. How could those who have no love for God be happy where he displays his glories in all their infinite fulness? How could they take pleasure in the immediate presence, and under all the Divine manifestations of the Redeemer, whom through life they have rejected?—whose salvation they have slighted and refused? How could they join in the new song which is sung in heaven, when they have never learned nor lisped the first note of praise for redeeming grace? No, heaven is *not their own place*.

They have not one qualification for heaven. What happiness, what favor to Judas, to have gone to heaven, when, after betraying his Lord, he closed his guilty and miserable life by an act of self-violence? All are not equally guilty with Judas; but every sinner who remains impenitent till death, is equally disqualified for heaven. It is, then, no just ground of complaint that the finally wicked are not saved. It is impossible to save them. God's infinite *benevolence itself* forbids it; there were no mercy in it. Throw open to them the gates of heaven, and not one *would enter in*. And what ground of complaint is there that they do not possess the necessary qualifications for heaven? Will sinners complain that they have their choice, that they are treated as rational creatures and free moral agents? Compulsion, not freedom surely, were ground of complaint: "And ye will not come

unto me, said Christ, that ye might have eternal life." This their way is their folly, their sin, not their misfortune. No, the mouth of every sinner will be stopped, as he makes his way, at death, to the world of endless despair: it is his own place. He has no qualification for heaven, and therefore cannot enter that world.

2. Our subject teaches and enforces the absolute necessity of a thorough change of heart in order to salvation. We have seen that the sinner, in his natural state, possesses no qualification for the happiness of heaven. That happiness springs from holiness, of which the unrenewed sinner is entirely destitute. There is not an object, or being, or employment, in that world, which can afford him any pleasure; but they would be sources of unmixed pain. The necessary preparation primarily and essentially depends on the state of the heart. The heart, by nature, is corrupt: "it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The heart, then, must be changed. Without this, there can be no happiness, which proceeds from holiness. So true, so emphatically true, are the words of our Saviour to Nicodemus, and equally appropriate to every human being: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The simple meaning is, that heaven is a place of such purity and holiness, that without a radical, thorough change of heart, there is no qualification for partaking of its bliss. Surely, then, such a prerequi-

site is not only an essential one, but is, indeed, no just occasion of surprise. "Marvel not," said our Saviour to Nicodemus, "that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." He repeats, and explains, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is a new nature: "Old things are done away, behold all things are become new." New views of God—new affections towards him—new desires—new joys. For "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

No, there is no marvel in this. The contrary might well awaken, and fill with astonishment. And is an entire surrender of the heart to God (for that is all that is demanded) a hard condition? Ah, ought not every sinner leap for joy at the privilege?

3. Our subject furnishes a test of moral character, as God judges of character—a sure index, to every one of us, to our future eternal condition, if we die as we are. It shows to us all, whether we are fair candidates for eternal happiness, or eternal misery. We have only to ascertain whether our views and feelings and course of life are adapted to, or in accordance with what we have revealed to us of the heavenly world. Whether we have that love to God now, which the fuller and more glorious manifestations which he makes

of himself in heaven, will raise to proportional degrees of ardor, and our highest desire now is to love him more. In one word, whether increasing holiness, even unto perfection, is now our strongest desire, our highest aim, shown to be such by our habitual conduct. Whoever can truly affirm this, will not fail of eternal life. Heaven is his own place—heaven will be his eternal home. However yet imperfect, he has that which will be kept by the power of God unto salvation; that which adapts him to the objects and employments of heaven, will insure perfect sanctification and eternal salvation. But if we are destitute of these essential qualities, our present course, our present prospect is towards a widely different destination; and if we remain thus till our state of probation closes, the place of Judas—the place of misery without end, will also be our own place. For it is not the highest enormity or aggravation of guilt that insures such a doom, but utter unpreparedness and disqualification for a different destiny. Momentous considerations, therefore, press the immediate decision of the point on which our eternity is depending. Every one of us has now a decided moral character; and there is that in our character which lays a foundation for endless happiness or endless misery. Every consideration which can be supposed to influence a rational immortal being, in our state and condition, presses an honest and an immediate decision on the point here presented. An hour's delay may prove fatal to some who are now utterly

unprepared for heaven. An hour's delay will certainly increase the peril of all who are still without an interest in the salvation of Christ. And why should there be the delay of an hour, or of a moment, in regard to a subject big with such consequences? God is ever ready to pardon on the first sigh of a broken heart, and to heal that heart on the first look of faith to Christ. O, that every sinner would heave that sigh—would take that look!

XVIII.

F A I T H.

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”—

ROMANS 4 : 3.

No term, to a Christian audience, is more familiar; no doctrine, to any of our race, more important; and few subjects, to most real Christians, less distinctly and definitely understood, than faith. Scarcely a subject, however, in the whole circle of revealed truths, has been more frequently or extensively discussed, either in sermons from the pulpit, or volumes from the press. “The controversy,” said a late eminent divine, “began in the days of the Apostles, and has continued ever since;” this alone shows the high importance which is attached to it, in the great scheme of salvation, by all who profess to believe that God has revealed such a scheme. Beside, what can be more deeply interesting to mankind, than the sinner’s justification before God? Unless justified, no one of our race can be saved.

It is a happy circumstance that an experimental acquaintance with Divine truth does not depend on

unerringly correct views; that the power of a saving faith may be felt, even though not understood in all its bearings and relations. For multitudes enjoy the former, who have neither the ability, nor the opportunity, nor the means for the latter. For this was the condition of all the saints of old. "They," says the Apostle, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." They had the promises, we see their accomplishment. And where can we find examples of a more powerful, unwavering, self-sacrificing faith, than among them? Read the long catalogue, as furnished in the eleventh of the Hebrews, and we need search no farther. They have never been surpassed for the power of faith, even since the clearer light of the Gospel dispensation. No better method, therefore, can be pursued, in order to ascertain what that faith is, by which the sinner is justified, than by selecting some prominent Scripture example, in which it was best manifested and illustrated. Such an example must necessarily embrace all the essential characteristics of faith, having received the direct testimony of God himself. Such an example is that of Abraham. He so eminently exemplified that faith which is the great fundamental principle of human salvation, that he is styled the "Father of all them that believe." And on this very account he is repeatedly referred to in the Scriptures. Him we have

selected as furnishing the most striking and instructive example of justifying, saving faith, which our world ever beheld. "Abraham believed God, and *it*' (that is, his faith) "was counted unto him for righteousness." What, then, was that faith which Abraham exercised? For what his faith was, in all essential respects, evangelical, saving faith now is. "Know, therefore," says Paul, "that they which are of faith, are the children of Abraham." What, then, were the characteristics of Abraham's faith? And I remark,

1. Implicit belief in the naked word of God. It was to him enough that God made his will known, to command his entire confidence. The proof of this is seen in his whole history, by which he obtained the distinguished appellation of the "father of all them that believe." One of the most striking instances of this is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, often referred to by the Apostle Paul. It respected an heir and a numerous posterity, under the most unpromising, and to human appearances, impossible circumstances. As the Apostle expresses it, "Who against hope, believed in hope." There is not a hint of incredulity; rather, as Paul adds, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. And, therefore, it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us,

also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead." He knew it was God who spake, in whom he had entire confidence. And he believed in the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

2. Abraham unhesitatingly *obeyed* God. This point is no less evident and striking from his whole history, than his implicit and unwavering belief in God's word. Indeed, his obedience necessarily resulted from his faith. There are, however, two most remarkable instances of his obedience, which should be recalled, though familiar to you all. The first is thus stated: "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." The original command is recorded in Genesis (twelfth chapter), and runs thus: "The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." This, surely, was no light trial. It would have been an alleviation had he known the place of his destination; it would have relieved his friends from much distress, and thus have abated much of his own on their account. He had, no doubt, to encounter the derision of his neighbors, as well as the remonstrances and expostulations of his relatives and friends. Whatever might have been his apprehensions in prospect of his removal, the

result showed the endurance of many hardships and trials during a journey of more than three hundred miles, through a vast and perilous wilderness. But he knew the command came from God; and this was enough to insure his ready obedience.

But many years after this, Abraham's faith and obedience were put to a far severer test. I need not attempt to portray it, had I the power and the time. I will relate it only in the simple language of inspiration: "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son." The command was given under every circumstance calculated to awaken the deepest feeling, the keenest pain of a father's heart: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

How many and powerful objections might have arisen, and would have arisen and been urged, in one of less faith and less confidence in God than Abraham felt and exercised! But not an intimation of wavering on his part. He immediately prepared to comply with the Divine command. The sequel is familiar to you all.

3. Another most important item in the faith of Abraham, respected the Being who was the particular object of it. This was He, most clearly, who appeared to him, whose word he believed, and whose commands

he obeyed. The inspired record is: "The Lord" (*i. e.*, Jehovah) "said unto Abraham." Again: "After these things, the Lord (Jehovah) came unto Abraham, saying," &c.

But who was meant by *Jehovah*? Not God the Father; for our Saviour himself has expressly told us, "No man hath seen God (the Father) at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." This, the Son, or second Person in the Godhead, often did, in the days of Abraham, and the Patriarchs and the Prophets, in an assumed human form for that purpose, as in the days of his actual incarnation. This fact is easily established from an examination of numerous instances recorded in the Old Testament. As a single example—for we have not time to refer to more—the *man* who wrestled with Jacob, and over whom Jacob was permitted to prevail, is expressly called God: "And Jacob called the place Peniel; for I have seen *God* face to face." And yet Jesus said, "No man hath seen God at any time,"—meaning his Father. The one infinite God said also to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." But St. Paul has settled this point, referring to the Israelites in the wilderness: "Neither let us tempt *Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."

The passage to which Paul refers reads thus: "And the people spake against *God* and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the

wilderness? And the Lord (Jehovah) sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." This *God*, this *Jehovah*, Paul expressly tells us, was *Christ*. That Abraham and all the saints of old looked forward to a great *sacrifice* to be offered at some future period of the world, is evident from all the sacrifices appointed and offered in their day, as mere *types* of that future great sacrifice. It is absolutely incredible that their faith centred in, and terminated upon, the *victims* themselves which were sacrificed. Only as *types*, was there any congruity, any appropriateness, between their blood and the pardon of sin. So Paul tells us: "For it is not *possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." It was Abel's faith, looking through the bleeding "firstling of his flock" to the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God, which rendered his offering "more excellent than that of Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts."

But if this were true of those saints, much more may we infer it of Abraham, who saw in his own son a most signal type of the suffering Son of God. The only difference between those ancient saints and us is, they had the promises of which we have the *fulfilment*—they look forward to a Saviour to come, we back to a Saviour who has come. Besides, in full confirmation of the correctness of these views, the Saviour himself said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to

see my day; and he saw it and was glad." He saw it only as foretold to him, and as the promise of God revealed the glorious fact. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one; and to thy seed, which is Christ." Thus Abraham's faith centred in and rested on Christ.

Thus much for the faith of Abraham; a faith which procured his justification before God, as God himself has declared; of course, embracing all the essential characteristics of that exercise or grace, that faith which obtained for him the high character of being "the father of all them that believe," and which St. Paul so often held up to view, as furnishing all the marks or properties of that faith, by which sinners are now justified and saved. That faith of Abraham has been embraced under the three heads which we have made the topics of our remarks thus far.

Let us now see, as briefly as possible, if they do not include all that is required by evangelical faith, or the faith which the New Testament demands in order to salvation.

1. Then, evangelical faith requires that we believe in God, without distinction of persons. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And thus we read, "The jailer rejoiced, believing in God." My text says, "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

2. Evangelical faith has special respect to Christ as its object. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." We have abundantly seen that Abraham's faith was on the Being who appeared to him, who was Christ, and that all his sacrifices pointed for their efficacy to the great sacrifice to come, which was Christ.

3. Evangelical faith requires us to believe in Christ, in all his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. As a Prophet, we read: "Then said Jesus," to those Jews who believed on him, "if ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed." "Lord," said Peter, "to whom shall we go, but to thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." As a Priest: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." As a King: "I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Abraham believed in him in all these offices. He believed in all the promises which he made to him, and all the directions which he gave him. He looked forward, as we have seen, to a great sacrifice, typified by that of Isaac. He obeyed him, as having all authority, and a right to command him, and with a readiness which was never surpassed. Here was a full practical acknowledgment of his faith in him in all his offices, as Prophet, and Priest, and King; although he was probably ignorant that he distinctly sustained those threefold relations. He believed all that they embraced.

4. Evangelical faith is belief with the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. If thou believest with all thine heart," said Philip to the Eunuch, "thou mayest be baptized." Need I say that Abraham's belief was with the heart? Could anything short of that have influenced him to such ready, unhesitating, and prompt obedience?

Once more, and in few words, does evangelical faith include, as essential to it, as entering into its very existence, though in itself a distinct emotion, unlimited confidence, and trust in, and supreme love towards God and Jesus Christ—equally ready to do his will as to receive or rely on the Divine promises? But in all these respects who is, or when lived the man that more eminently displayed all these attributes, or more signally exemplified all these moral qualities, than he, who, as an example, is "the father of all them that believe?"

What more striking examples of faith can be collected from all ages of the world, even since the advent of Him who is, and always was, the great and glorious object of it,—since what was once prediction, has become fulfilment, what once was naked promise, is now full accomplishment, since the Great Antitype of all types has come and performed the work which was given him to do? What more striking examples of faith can be gathered from the whole believing part of our world, than is found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews? And yet as their

justification was concerned, all were influenced by the same simple principle,—faith. Nothing else is there named in regard to any of them. “By faith” this was done, “by faith” that was endured. The faith of Abraham was the faith of them all: is the faith of every true Christian now: that alone by which any soul is saved. We are apt to imagine that those heroes possessed, either physically or spiritually, something far beyond what is now attainable—something to which faith is now utterly inadequate, and what is now not to be expected of Christians. Alas, how far from the truth is this fancy!

True, we behold few or no such specimens of sturdy, uncompromising, self-sacrificing faith. But the spirit of it, where it really exists, is the same as dwelt in the bosom, and showed itself in the life of Abraham. What less, or rather, what other can one have, and have it at all? Can there be faith where God’s naked word is not believed? Can there be faith where there is refusal, or even hesitation to obey him? Can there be true faith where the object of it is degraded to a creature? Where his word is not searched for his instructions, regarded as the great Prophet? Where his atoning blood is not wholly relied upon, as the great High Priest, for pardon? Where his authority, as King, is not most cordially and obediently respected?—But I need not repeat all the properties which characterized the faith of Abraham, which exercise in its nature every one must have who is

ever justified and saved. Which trait, or item, or article could be taken from his creed, and not mar—not utterly destroy the whole system? Faith—true evangelic faith—is one consistent, harmonious whole. It may be analyzed—examined in its parts—but nothing omitted, nothing abated, as a non-essential. It must all be there—or there is nothing. The only proper antagonism of evangelical faith is infidelity. In this view, there is no real difference between unbelief and disbelief. Our Saviour settled that point by one of the most solemn declarations which ever fell from his sacred lips,—“He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

We have seen, in the example that has been before us, what true faith is. We have, in the case of Abraham, its nature and its operations—how it believed and obeyed—to what it prompted in the departments of labor, self-sacrifice, and suffering—the confidence it reposed in God—the affection it felt towards him—and the support it afforded him in all his trials—the joy it kindled at every look towards the great sacrifice, though seen at a distance. Is this our faith?—not as to degree—but this its nature—its spirit—its consistency—its promptings—the combined harmony of its parts—its concentration on Christ?

For there is “one faith,” says an Apostle, as well as “one Lord, and one baptism.” It has one spirit; the tide of it should rise higher, and beat stronger, and be more unwavering in the hearts of Christians now,

than in the hearts of saints of old, inasmuch as now it looks back on what is history, while theirs rested on prediction and promises. Christ has come—has personally taught—has died, and gone to heaven to complete the work of redemption. But though we shall not surpass them, let us follow hard on in the steps which marked their course.

One word from the lips of Christ himself to those who have not the faith which saves,—“He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

XIX.

THE BACKSLIDER RECOVERED, AND THE IMPENITENT CONVERTED.

“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”—JOB 42 : 5, 6.

THIS was the acknowledgment and humble confession of Job to his Maker. It is the language of every individual, when brought to see and realize his true condition in the sight of God, whether the wandering, but reclaimed Christian, or the sinner, whose eyes and heart the Spirit of God has opened and renewed. The individual who uttered the text was an eminently pious man, before the time to which it refers. A more excellent character is given of no one, in all the Bible. God himself said of him, “There is none like him in all the earth; a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” From that day he became a deeply afflicted man. And during the period of his severe trials, though mentioned in terms of the highest commendation by the Prophet Ezekiel, and set forth as an example of patience by

the Apostle James, he often manifested great and sinful infirmity; less the result, however, of his extreme sufferings, though he sometimes uttered himself in unjustifiable complaints, than of the uncharitable and unjust charges of his mistaken friends and officious counsellors. They warmly contended, and he as earnestly controverted the position, that God here dealt with his creatures according to their moral character; that to no inconsiderable extent the present is a state of retribution; and, consequently, that severe afflictions prove the sufferer to be either a self-deceiver, or a hypocrite. The dispute became warm, with no prospect of its termination, till God himself interposed, and showed both parties their error, and convinced them of their mutual offences. It was at that Divine manifestation that Job exclaimed, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Here then is a plain distinction expressed between "hearing with the ear," and "seeing with the eye;" and a plain statement of the consequences resulting from the latter. And, as already remarked, the declaration is equally applicable to the lapsed Christian and the converted sinner, at the moment they are brought to realize their true condition, and are recovered and restored to the Divine favor.

My object will be briefly to describe these different states, as applicable to these different characters.

I. In regard to the Christian. Deep and criminal imperfection attaches to every child of God. There is no absolute perfection on earth. That which was ascribed to Job, by his Maker, was relative, and not absolute. None then on earth could be compared to him. It was a perfection consisting in the completeness or consistency of his religious character, as a whole; his uniform and equal observance of all the duties which were demanded of him: a sense in which the term *perfect* is often and properly used. But, even yet, he was chargeable with much sin. Of this he became deeply sensible, and poured forth the most sincere and genuine repentance. Previously to this, however, he was a good man. He lost not his standing in the covenant of grace. But he lost the *deepness* of his impressions. He at no time renounced, or attempted to renounce his allegiance to his Maker; but he labored under many wrong impressions. He had mistaken views as well as his three counsellors. God, too, had a special design in withdrawing from him much of his wonted influence, and leaving him to the buffetings, and temptations, and onsets of the adversary, to whom great power was for a special purpose permitted. During this period it was that he "heard of God only by the hearing of the ear." But we do not now take *his* views and impressions, as our only guide to our present remarks. The declaration is still applicable to most Christians, in a variety of respects, and in many, very different from those

which characterized the condition of Job. Giving the words, therefore, a less restricted latitude, as but too often applicable to Christians, I observe,

1. They are descriptive of their state, when they have lost the vividness of their impressions of God and the Saviour, and divine and eternal things. These impressions are not utterly erased from their minds. There may not be entire forgetfulness of these things. Never a day may pass, however absorbed by the things of the world, during which they think not of God, and Christ, and eternity. This is probably true of all sober and sedate sinners. Yet their impressions are slight and inconstant. They take no deep hold on the mind, and make a still slighter impression on the heart; and consequently manifest little or nothing of it in their life. Their outward course is little, if at all, distinguished from that of the world.

While their impressions from these infinitely important objects are thus slight and feeble, they "hear of God only by the hearing of the ear." In this state they read and hear his word, visit the house of prayer, and notice the events of Providence. Their hopes, of course, are languid and feeble. They do not abandon them, though they scarcely stop to inquire whether well or ill founded. They are not miserable, but they have little enjoyment. There is the impression of a great remove from God; a mighty distance between them and the throne of grace, even while the knee is bent in prayer. God's word is

almost a sealed book. Divine Providence pours blessings into their laps, and strews every step of their path with favors. They know, indeed, from whose hand they come. Yet their feeling of dependence is slight, and their acknowledged indebtedness awakens but feeble emotions. They pursue the familiar round of duties—but feel little engagedness in their performance. Divine promises afford little encouragement. Divine threatenings excite little alarm. Ah, such, and at such times, “hear of God only by the hearing of the ear,” while the very sound of his voice seems distant and low. They have lost the vividness of their impressions of God, and Christ, and eternal things. Of God, as their Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor. Of Christ, as their bleeding Saviour, and appointed Judge; and of eternity, as the world of endless retribution. But—

2. They have lost their impression of their obligation to be perfect Christians. By *perfect*, I do not here mean sinless; though it is certainly true that the most solemn obligations are upon us to be thus perfect. And no Christian is, at least, ripening for heaven, while he does not aim at the attainment of that state. I use the word in the sense in which God pronounced Job a perfect man; in the sense of completeness; or an equal regard to all requirements—although, in respect to that eminent man, it denoted, not merely completeness, or universal consistency, but superior and high attainments. Job, probably, if not certainly,

lost that standing, during the period to which he refers in the text, and which caused him to say, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear." And this may well be said of every Christian, who has become inconstant in the performance of religious duties; or who, habitually, or frequently, omits any one of them. It is the same authority that enjoins them all.

And that authority is disregarded in the neglect, or allowed omissions of one of them. The spirit of God's law is one and the same; and therefore it is, that he who "offends in one point is guilty of all." God speaks in every command. His voice is as distinct as when he spake with Moses on the Mount. But it reaches only the outward ear of him who disobeys, in any case of duty. In every command, God addresses himself to the heart, since from the heart all acceptable obedience proceeds. He, therefore, who allows himself in the neglect of any known duty, is at best, only in the state in which he hears of God by the hearing of the ear, for his heart is not properly affected. This is the condition of the Christian who neglects secret prayer; family prayer, if the head of a family; or the habitual reading of the Scriptures, or public worship, or any other duties which devolve upon him, as a consistent Christian; or negligently and carelessly performs them. That Christian "hears of God only by the hearing of the ear." That he attempts to perform any duty, in

however cold and formal a manner, is evidence of some regard for his obligations. They are felt, however, but slightly.

3. The Christian who is in the state which we are describing, has very slight impressions of his responsibility as an active laborer and devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our past remarks have regarded him rather in his private capacity, or at most, in some of his more limited social relations. But the duties thence arising are not all that God requires of him. In making him his child, he has constituted him a public servant. By the faithful labors of his friends his kingdom is to be built up in the world. This was one of the conditions of a covenant relation to God. One of the petitions which is expressly or impliedly to enter into every prayer, whether in the closet or at the family altar, is, "Father, thy kingdom come." This implies, when properly or acceptably offered, active engagedness to advance that kingdom; a readiness to employ personal service, personal influence, and possessions, as a conscientious regard to religious obligations, ardent love to the Redeemer, and deep anxiety for the souls of his fellow-beings, shall dictate. He that fails to do this, has but slight impressions of his responsibility and obligations as a servant of Christ. And all the solemn injunctions of God's word and his favoring providences are so far unheeded by him, that in them he only hears of God by the hearing of the ear.

The state thus briefly and generally described, in which, perhaps, all Christians are sometimes found, and most Christians too habitually, is not indeed their worst state. For there is implied in it a general, though infinitely too slight a recognition of God, and of their relations and accountability to him; and some conviction of their obligations to him and to their Saviour, as the hope of their own salvation is concerned, and of what duty demands of them in behalf of others. There *may* be, for a time, a *deeper forgetfulness* of God, a deeper declension and a sounder sleep. The spirit of the world, if not indeed a worse spirit, may for a season become so powerful as to paralyze all the energies of the Christian; and he becomes equally unconcerned for his own immortal interests and those of others. It must, however, be for a little season only; for otherwise it must destroy all hope, at least for him, and his hope for himself be that only of the hypocrite. Nor is such the state intended by the text; for such a man were deaf, instead of "hearing by even the hearing of the ear." It were spiritual death, and not mere declension. Such a state bears no analogy to that in which Job was, for we have no evidence that *he* was ever thus stupid. But this state will continue, till, with him, those who are in it are led to exclaim, "But now mine eye seeth Thee." This introduces to us an entirely different state of things in regard to the Christian.

Let us briefly look at the manner, the nature, and

some of the causes and effects of the change here indicated. And,

1. It is often as suddenly wrought as in the regeneration of the sinner. This was evidently the case with Job. Down to the very moment of uttering the exclamation of the text, no perceptible change, or indication of a change, is noticeable. He was as repining, and as warmly engaged in justifying himself against the charges of his friends, as at any previous time. But light suddenly broke into his mind, and grace into his heart; and he exclaims, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but *now* mine eye seeth Thee." The circumstances may be different in different Christians; but the change in them from their slight impressions of God and the Saviour, and eternal things, of their obligations, and their responsibilities, their declension, worldly-mindedness, and deadness to a proper conviction and apprehension of their criminal defectiveness, may be, and usually is, as sudden in their case, as it was in his.

Christians are not long waking out of the sleep into which they have fallen. Their convictions are deep, usually, from the first. And if they experience a painful course of conviction, it is more commonly the case that it follows, rather than precedes their renewal. Unlike, in most cases, the course of sinners who are brought to repentance, they do not attempt to return to God by reforming in a few respects; by returning to the performance of some duties, while they

neglect others. If they are Christians indeed, though fallen or backslidden ones, such partial reformation can afford them no satisfaction. They must and will break off from every false and evil way, and resume every duty they have neglected, and engage in them all with a new spirit and a new relish.

2. The change which is produced in Christians on their renewed repentance and recovery from a state of declension and sleep, is often as great and as difficult to be effected, as the regeneration and repentance of the sinner. It is, indeed, a common remark that it is more so. We speak not of the power which is necessary, in either case. For nothing short of the omnipotent grace of God can effect it in either. But Christians, when in a state of declension, are scarcely distinguishable from the rest of the world. They show as much eagerness in their worldly pursuits, and manifest as little anxiety for the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, in the repentance and salvation of sinners. Not unfrequently, a long course of painful providences, as means, becomes necessary to awaken them. The case of Job, indeed, affords but in part an illustration of this remark. His afflictions, though just, were not sent on him as judgments, or punishments; they were not intended as means to renew him again to repentance, and bring him back from his departures from God. God pronounced him to be an eminently pious man, at the very time of sending his afflictions.

But God had a special design in sending them. He chose thus to magnify his grace, and to show its power, and sustaining and preserving efficacy, to his great adversary, and for the encouragement and consolation of his people in after generations. And from no record of his dealings may Christians derive more benefit than from them. But the test seemed sometimes too severe, and he yielded to the impulses of a remaining sinful nature; and hence, became the provoking cause of many of his trials. And this, no doubt, was the reason of their long continuance. The same course of proceedings is often witnessed, and often necessary still. It is the course God has always pursued, as the whole history of his dealings in every age shows. Christians are not afflicted because they are Christians. Many seem to imagine that it is a mere arbitrary appointment, that "through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and some have undertaken to explain what they regarded as mysterious, the necessity of such a course, as a proper preparation for the happiness of heaven, on the principle of contrast. But they overlook the real cause. There may be, and is, not a little that appears mysterious, in the great and peculiar sufferings which are sometimes sent on the most pious and devoted; while those destitute of their eminent qualities, pass on smoothly through the world. But in the case of the former, God may have the same reasons, in their severe trials and sufferings, which influenced

him in the case of Job,—to magnify his grace, and to show its sufficiency under all circumstances. But it is not sufficiently considered, that while such suffer justly, and even far less than they deserve, judgments and afflictions are the necessary means of keeping most Christians from fatal wanderings. The sins, too, of Christians are peculiarly aggravated. They not only sin against the light and the love which are displayed before their eyes, the proofs of which are everywhere around them, but against light, love, and grace experienced. Light has shined into their minds; love has been shed abroad in their hearts; grace has been given to subdue their enmity; “they have tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” They have known the bitterness and yet happy consequences of repentance; and placed themselves voluntarily, and cheerfully, and gratefully, under the most solemn obligations. To decline from such a state, to fall from such a height into forgetfulness, lukewarmness, and sleep, mark an offence of deep aggravation.

It is, however, no doubt often the case, that this effect is produced without any visible or perceptible means. God sometimes manifests himself directly to a backslidden Christian. Light suddenly bursts upon his mind; painful convictions are instantly awakened in the conscience. The heart at once breaks. He is overwhelmed with a sense of his ingratitude, and

forgetfulness, and broken resolutions, and disregarded vows. He suddenly starts, as from a sleep. Such suddenness evidently appears to have marked the change in Job, when he exclaimed, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." He had been, as it were, in a state of delirium. No doubt his extreme sufferings and unequalled trials contributed much to produce that state, yet he had not been altogether innocent. Nay, he had deeply offended, and attempted a self-justification which was an offence to his Maker. The moment God said to him, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it." Job exclaims, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee! I will lay my hand upon my mouth—I will proceed no farther. I have uttered that I understood not: things too wonderful for me, which I know not." "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear." His views had been obscured. He had lost the deepness and vividness of his impressions of God and divine things. He instantly awakes from that state, and adds, "But now mine eye seeth Thee." How similar to this has been the experience of many a child of God! Their previous condition may have been very different from his; but the change no less great, sudden, overwhelming, and entire. Is it not indeed the case with every unfaithful and wandering Christian, when brought to see and realize his true condition? With

every Christian who has become lukewarm, and is revived? Strange, that what has been invariably true for two thousand years, yea, ever since God had a covenant people, should be brought as an objection to a work! For it is their suddenness which has been objected to in revivals of religion. And yet they must be sudden, so far as the Church or Christians are concerned, if they are ever revived. This may or may not be the case in the conversion of sinners. Hence, frequently, and more commonly, few are converted at the same time. The work is often continued months, while every day may witness to the conversion of some.

And so is it more frequently, and almost always the case, that sinners continue for days, and sometimes for weeks, in a state of gradually deepening conviction, before the heart yields, and the sinner submits. But this is seldom, if ever, the case, with a Christian who has become remiss, but is brought to see his condition. There is yet something within him which answers to the *first note* of alarm. A spark of grace, which revives at the *first touch* of the Spirit of God.

His former experience, if a real child of God, has prepared him for a rededication to God, and immediate return to duty. He has no apologies, no excuses to plead. Excuses and apologies among Christians are peculiar to a state of apathy and declension. It is *then* they attempt to excuse and even

justify themselves for their neglect of duty, their devotedness to the world, and their indulgence in that, whatever it may be, which is inconsistent with their Christian character, and solemn professions. Not a sentence of the kind, I may safely affirm, ever escapes their lips, not a feeling of the kind exists in their hearts, from the moment that the Spirit of God renews his impression on their hearts, or specially calls up their attention to their condition. They are only astonished that they could *ever* have lost the impressions they once had. They marvel, as well they may, that they could have fallen into sleep; and are filled with wonder and gratitude to God, that he did not suffer them to sleep on and perish, and cannot help feeling, if not exclaiming, in the very language of Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee;" and like him too, "abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes."

Thus have I attempted, though generally and imperfectly, to describe the difference clearly indicated in the two clauses of the text, and to briefly illustrate their applicability to Christians.

In describing the state of the sinner, as represented "by the hearing of the ear," I remark,

1. That what is expressed by this phrase is universally true. There is no human being, possessed of the ordinary faculties of such a being, who has

not this mode of knowing God. The Creator has furnished abundant evidence of his existence, and of at least some of his perfections, which are level with the lowest exercise of the rational faculties. Man has been styled a religious being, as his most distinguishing characteristic. By this it is not meant, indeed, that he possesses by nature any holy principle, but that he is not only capable of becoming a holy being, but that there is that naturally in him which leads him to recognize a Supreme Being.

There are many, indeed, and some, perhaps, are to be found in Christianized countries, who do not know him by the name of God, or any of his usual names, and who are utterly ignorant of his true character. But it is to be questioned if there is, or ever was, one of ordinary understanding, who was utterly ignorant of the existence of a Supreme Being. It is not true in the very darkest regions of heathenism. The existence of idolatry, which is universal, where the true God is not worshipped, demonstrably proves this. On this ground St. Paul declared, "Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." The language, however, of creation and providence (for both these means of knowing God are included in the above declaration), though the most imperfect that can be possessed,

yet leaves every man without excuse who does not even glorify or worship God, as God. And the sole reason assigned is, not destitution of all knowledge, but the corruption of the heart. "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." This, however, may be termed the very lowest, or most imperfect means or manner of hearing of God "by the hearing of the ear."

2. The means of a knowledge of God rise an important degree higher, when we take into the account the faculty of conscience. On this faculty God has impressed a clearer apprehension of himself, both of his existence and his nature, than on that of the understanding, or any other faculty. Conscience is the power which convicts of sin and guilt. But sin and guilt presuppose the existence of a law, either of a written law, or of a law of nature; they presuppose a standard, the nature of which is holy. But there are millions of our race who have not the written law, while there is not one who has no consciousness of sin and guilt. And this is the view which the Apostle Paul gives us of the conscience, as affording a knowledge of the nature and character of God. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law (the written law), do, by nature, the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness,

and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

This greatly increases the inexcusableness of the individual who does not obey the dictates of his conscience, in at least abstaining from what awakens in him a conviction of sin and guilt. It is the voice of God within him. But God may speak louder than in the above instance, and yet his voice prove equally ineffectual. For

3. The sinner may be instructed in the doctrines of Divine revelation; his belief may embrace the whole circle of religious truths, and that belief have every mark of entire sincerity; he may have the most unhesitating belief of the existence of God, and of all the peculiar and infinite perfections of his nature; the distinct and peculiar character and offices of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit; the fall of man; his innate and entire depravity; the necessity of regeneration; a future state of rewards and punishments, of eternal duration; the binding force of the Divine law, and the absolute necessity of personal, experimental religion. All this may be without rational doubt, yet all this may consist with an impenitent and unsubmitive heart, and consequently, be no more than "hearing of God with the hearing of the ear."

4. The voice of God may be still more audible. The conscience may be awakened to a higher degree than to produce a mere consciousness of guilt, and an

apprehension of unsafety. There may be the most pungent convictions ; and these convictions may only excite a spirit of more determined rebellion. If not, then is there no blasphemy in perdition. But, our Saviour has told us of some who saw and knew, but the more strongly to dislike and resist. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Surely there is nothing improbable, or uncommon, in being entirely convinced of what we entirely dislike.

Again, God has spoken *still louder*, nor spoken altogether in vain—for external reformation has been the effect. Those courses and acts which produce the pain will be avoided. But mere external reformation is not the ground of hope : surely, it is not better ground than the amiableness and unexceptionable morality of those who were never otherwise than amiable and moral : and yet this was declared altogether untenable in the case of the young nobleman, and equally so, in the case of every other one. And we remark,

Once more. That all these outward calls and inward admonitions may be enforced by solemn and awakening providences. God often reveals himself most clearly in his providences. His goodness is seen and felt, and cannot but be acknowledged ; they afford incontestable proofs of his benevolence. Divine justice is often strikingly displayed in them. Often does God show his hatred of sin, and his approbation of virtue, in his dealings towards his creatures. These often possess a

judicial character, and they are sometimes evidently retributive. The iniquities of men are often visited upon themselves. Divine providences are sometimes of a very alarming and instructive character; they speak with an impressive and powerful eloquence; seldom do they fail to produce some effect; they either force to submission, or provoke to new acts of rebellion: the latter is but too often the effect. But in every instance, where the providences of God are unaccompanied with a saving influence, all the knowledge derived from them is only "by the hearing of the ear;" they strike the senses, carry conviction to the understanding, wake up alarm in the conscience, and produce a partial and temporary reformation. But, if this be all, they still leave the heart unsubdued, and the sinner without hope. There have been many who have thus been taught—have thus lived—and thus died; and we fear there are multitudes of others, who are following on in the same course, to experience the same end.

Then all the instructions afforded by creation, by the conscience, by the written law, and the published Gospel, with the additional instructions and powerful enforcements of providences of every variety, and even the awakening, and sometimes deeply convicting influence of the Holy Spirit,—these, all these, amount to no more than hearing "by the hearing of the ear." This is mere light without saving grace; while the full blaze of eternity can convert no soul. What, then,

is it to *see* God? Or what is implied by the words, "But now mine eye seeth Thee?"

In order to present the subject clearly to view, it becomes necessary to state what it does not imply.

1. It does not imply, necessarily, a change of one's views, or belief, in regard to the great and essential doctrines and truths of the Bible. These may already be correct. Many an impenitent sinner has as correct views of Gospel truth, as the best-instructed Christian. Information, even perfect knowledge, may exist without any holiness. St. Paul has expressly decided this case. "Though I have all knowledge and all faith, and have not charity or love, I am nothing." Knowledge and belief, then, can consist with unrepented sin, and even endless blasphemies.

2. Nor does it imply any new means of grace. These were fixed from eternity, and were all announced when the volume of inspiration was closed. Nor is it agreeable to the experience of the converted themselves, that their conversion is attributable to any *new* means; or that their attention was first arrested by any *uncommon* truth. Before even a sentence of the New Testament was written, our Saviour most explicitly taught the sufficiency of the means or the truths contained in the Old Testament. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Besides millions had possessed no other, and were then in heaven.

3. The expression, "mine eye seeth Thee," does not imply any supernatural or strange appearances, as objects of sight. Imagination, indeed, has had not a little to do in awakening attention to the interests of the soul, and creating alarm in view of one's eternity. Dreams even have produced the same effect. It is perfectly consistent with the character of God to employ any faculty of the mind, as a channel through which to operate or to convey truth to the mind or heart of the sinner. But nothing as to any saving influence can be inferred from the mode of operation. We must look to other effects, and other fruits, for anything decisive.

Once more. Nor do the expressions imply a pungency or a degree of painful conviction, of which no impenitent sinner is ever the subject. Painful convictions of sin, and of one's desert, these indeed are, and must be, where there are any just conceptions of the nature of sin, or of one's true condition. It is impossible to place any proper value on the bloody sacrifice of Christ, or his amazing condescension in coming into our world to redeem lost sinners, without having them. But the convictions of the merely awakened sinner are often more painful, where they do *not* than where they *do* end in conversion. The sinner is sometimes abandoned to despair, from which he never recovers,

while the convert is sustained by hope ; the one continues to resist, while the other submits. We are to place no confidence, therefore, in the mere painfulness of one's convictions. We are prepared now to show what they *do* imply.

As in the case of the backslidden, but recovered Christian, a great, essential, and sudden change takes place. There may be, and more commonly there is, a previous process or preparation, which is gradual, and of longer or shorter continuance; which is seldom, if ever, the case with the Christian who is brought to a real conviction of his true condition. Sinners sometimes remain a long time in a state of conviction. But there is a precise moment when conversion occurs. There must be a point where the soul ceases to travel from God, and turns towards him. The subject himself may not be able distinctly to mark it. It may be days, and weeks, and even months, before he has any comfortable satisfaction on the point, or before he is free from painful anxiety. But the representations of the new birth are such in the Bible, and the doctrine of the unrenewed man's entire moral depravity is so abundantly established, that the change denoted by regeneration must be sudden, must be instantaneous; while the same account affords no less evidence and assurance of the greatness of the change which has passed upon the converted sinner. If, therefore, we judge wholly from the nature of the case, as taught in the word of

God, we can arrive at no other conclusion. But it is not left to be inferred from the mere declarations of the Bible, or to be deduced from a course of reasoning. There is something of an experimental nature, something in matter of experience, which proves the greatness of the change, as well as its reality. For

1. There is a calmness, succeeding a state of alarm and agitation, which is new and peculiar. True, this is not decisive in itself. And were this all, it would amount to but slender evidence. For the subject himself, oftener than otherwise, suspects it and regards it only as evidence that his religious impressions are fast subsiding, and even that the Spirit of God has forsaken him. This may indeed be the case; yet this is often the genuine effect of the Spirit's own agency—the fruit of his special sanctifying influence. But when it awakens apprehensions of the Spirit's departure, and leads to more earnest prayer, greater watchfulness, and a more unreserved dedication of one's self to God, then there is more than “the hearing of the ear.” The subject can say, though the vision may be exceedingly imperfect and obscure, “Now mine eye seeth Thee.” It may be as “through a glass, darkly;” it may be in the sense or degree in which the man whose sight the Saviour restored, said, “I see men as trees walking.” Or the state which Paul describes, when he exhorted, that “they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him.” When this is the nature and

tendency of that calmness which pervades the newly regenerated heart, then is it true, though it be with hesitation and doubt, he can say, "Now mine eye seeth Thee."

2. There is a feeling of submission which is new. And where this accompanies that calmness of which we have just been speaking, the evidence of renewing grace is greatly strengthened. There are, indeed, different kinds, as well as different degrees, of submission: from peaceful to joyous; from merely uncomplaining to the most entire; from unresisting to cordial. There is a submission which may be termed the submission of indifference. The sinner becomes wearied in his strivings; and hence gives over exertion, and settles down into indifference. There is, too, a submission, which I would call the submission of despair: when the subject of it seems to feel and say, "I may be saved, or I may be lost. I can do no more than I have done, and leave it with God to save or destroy." The submission of the regenerate sinner, however, is widely different from both. It arises from no feeling of indifference. He is never more alive to his immortal interests. It is infinitely removed from that which arises from the feeling that he has done all he can to save his soul, and can do no more. It is not on his doing all, or doing anything, that he relies. He does not cease to do, nor cease to do all he can. But his doing, if so I may speak, is to let God do all—to throw himself, as it

were, into the arms of his Saviour, who claims the glory of doing all, from the very first provision of his mercy to the consummation of his grace; from the first awakening of his Spirit to his perfect sanctification. While such an one accepts the punishment of his iniquity, his supreme aim is cheerfully to suffer, and devotedly to do the will of his Redeemer. This is a new and peculiar feeling. That individual can say, "Now mine eye seeth Thee."

3. He sees God in the glorious harmony of his plan of salvation. On the broad ground of a Divine atonement, which to him is the only conceivable ground of hope, he not only believes, but sees how God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. He sees the ground as well as necessity of the Spirit's regenerating operations on a totally depraved heart. His heart can solve, if his reason cannot, that great, and to so many, most perplexing difficulty, of man's entire dependence on God, and the perfect freedom of his own actions. And that the eternal decrees of Jehovah are all accomplished by the very freedom of the creature's actions; by the believer's perseverance unto eternal life, and the sinner's abandonment to endless death. A glorious consistency runs through the whole scheme of redemption. God is seen, save in heaven, more clearly, more gloriously, in nothing, than in the beautiful harmony of the whole system of redeeming grace.

The converted sinner perceives this harmony, and

exclaims—"Now, now, mine eye seeth Thee." God is love, and truth reflects that love; and perceiving and loving the truth, he sees and loves its Author. This principle runs through all the government of God. Hence, he recognizes God in all the events of his providence; he sees him in his mercies, and in his judgments. This principle applies to all circumstances and all conditions. I leave its further application to yourselves, and close the subject with two or three reflections.

1. Every one of us may easily perceive which part of our text applies to himself: whether it is true of him only that he has heard of God by the hearing of the ear, or can say, "Mine eye seeth him." Were we heathens, the former were true of us; how true then to the enlightened, the informed, the Gospel-instructed sinner! How often have we, even the little children of this congregation, heard of God "by the hearing of the ear." We learned his name and much of his character almost in our infancy, and have been learning something, yea much, from his word, and his providences, during our life thus far. And to all the outward calls, which the great God has been constantly addressing to us, he has added the whispers of his Spirit. But with all these we may perish. This is no more than hearing with the ear. We must see God; see him as he manifests himself by his Spirit to the heart; see him as he stamps the Saviour's image there; see him in his clearly apprehended loveliness; see him in the beauty

of his holiness. And have we all thus seen him? A more important point of inquiry cannot be presented. Our eternal destiny depends on it. If there be doubt, and we dismiss it before it be solved, satisfactorily and happily solved, we do it at our peril.

2. The various sources whence we derive our knowledge of God, if after all we perish, will be just so many sources of misery to us in eternity. We can never lose any of it. We shall carry it with us to his bar. If a heathen must wake up with surprise in eternity, with what *fearfulness* must enlightened sinners appear there! Provocations increase with abused knowledge. O, what a doom thus awaits sinners among us, who shall leave the world in all their impotence! In their constantly increasing knowledge of God, how are they "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God!"

3. It is a natural reflection from our subject, that if God appear so terrible to the sinner when he only manifests himself, as it were, to his senses, as he often does by his providences, what must it be to behold him face to face? Even the Christian often trembles when he thinks of that interview with the great God. Nothing but the hope of his approving smiles can sustain him. Seraphim and cherubim veil their faces in his presence. How the glorious presence of the lovely and the loving Saviour, on the Mount of Transfiguration, overpowered Peter, James, and John! Ah, what

then must be the effect of his presence on the sinner! When clothed in flesh, and in a form like themselves, how his enemies fell to the ground by one look from him in the Garden! Still more terrible was his appearance to Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus. And in awful language we hear it described, as he will appear in the last day, to those who leave the world without a saving interest in him. "Rocks, mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" And yet, sinner, you must meet him! And have you never seriously thought how you shall meet him? And can any sinner seriously think of it and not tremble? The solemn interview is approaching. The hour hastens when you shall see him face to face. Nothing but perfect holiness can stand before him. It is because Christians shall be perfectly holy that they will see him with joy; but that holiness must begin here. Begun here, it will be consummated at death. Let me then call on every sinner to repent, and repent now; for a little delay may prevent it forever.

XX.

CHRISTIAN EXCELLENCE.

“An old disciple.”—Acts 21 : 16.

THIS high commendation was passed on Mnason, of Cyprus. The verse which contains it furnishes all the information Inspiration has given of this venerable man. Nor can language be framed to express a higher character than the words which head this discourse describe. “An old disciple.” Mnason was not venerable for his years merely; but his numerous years were crowned with solid piety. He was not only an old man, but “an old disciple;” an aged Christian; or, as the original signifies, a disciple from the beginning. His name denotes a “seeker,” or “exhorter;” and reference is made to a term which is translated, “taught from youth.” Mnason, then, had not only lived long, but he had long been a scholar in the school of Christ. While a youth, too, he enlisted under his Saviour, as the Captain of his salvation. Some suppose he was one of the seventy disciples, or among the first converts at Cyprus; though, at this time, he was a citizen of Jerusalem, as appears from

his kindly tendering to the Apostle the hospitalities of his house, while he should remain in that city. Whether these conjectures are well or ill-founded, one thing is certain: he had, for many years, been engaged in the service of his Lord and Master. And instead of becoming wearied in it, he grew more faithful, more diligent, and more warmly attached to the cause which he had espoused. This appears, from the very circumstances under which this honorable mention is made of him, by the inspired penman of the text. Paul the Apostle, on his way, it seems, from Miletus to Jerusalem, stopped and tarried some days at Cæsarea. Here a prophet, named Agabus, met him, and delivered to him a message from the Holy Ghost. This prophet took Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet, said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost; so shall the Jews, at Jerusalem, bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Thus predicting the dangers and trials which awaited the Apostle at Jerusalem. But nothing could relax his purpose. All their attempts to dissuade him from it were unavailing. No threatening dangers could repress or damp the zeal and ardor of his pious soul. He panted to display the honors and the glory of his Redeemer's cross on the very spot where it had been crimsoned with his precious blood, and to plant it with his own hand among his crucifiers. And when no arguments could prevail on him to abandon his object, his friends

assented, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." Many of them, however, would accompany him, and, among them, one Mnason, of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom he should lodge. Though borne down under the weight of years, he wished to share with the Apostle the dangers and perils of his visit to Jerusalem. The testimony of so many years of fidelity to Christ, and attachment to his cause, he was ready to close and consummate with this benevolent proffer of his hospitalities, his influence, and efforts to aid the Apostle in the great objects of his heavenly commission. In this he acted from the impulse of ardent piety, furnishing the highest evidence, that, as he grew in years, he grew also in grace. Such was this man of God. Such was Mnason, of Cyprus, an old disciple—venerable man! His history, indeed, is told in two words. Yet words, how expressive, how full of import, how full of praise! Words which embrace, in their application to Mnason, everything amiable and lovely in youth; decisive and ardent in manhood; firm, dignified in old age. The same words are his epitaph. Who that values posthumous praise, and especially regards a reputation for eternity, would not prefer them, as the record of his history, to the volumes of panegyric that are written of the greatest heroes and statesmen that ever lived! More durable than all the inscriptions on marble or brass—written, too, by the pen of Inspiration, on the pages of life,—a

fair transcript of the same record in the book of God's everlasting remembrance.

With such an example before us, I purpose to sketch, though it be but faintly, the mere outlines of the character of an old disciple, and enforce its practical influence on this assembly.

I. The foundation of this character must be laid in early life. In youth, the heart must experience the renovating power of grace, and the soul be espoused to Christ. It is, indeed, true, that distinction of Christian character does not wholly depend on the number of years a person is a Christian; especially, if we judge from the examples of those who have received that character; for we sometimes find that those who enter the school of Christ in later life, far surpass many that were at least supposed to be Christians from their youth. This difference, however, may generally be ascribed to the greater diligence, the higher endowments, or more favorable advantages of the former. But, notwithstanding this difference, it does not follow that such would not have attained to higher distinction, in the Christian life, had they been pious from their youth.

Nor does it prove that without early piety, however rapid their progress, they are entitled to the honorable character of old disciples. Christianity is not a secret, by which a person arrives at perfection, or even distinction, at once. The period will, indeed, never come, in eternity, that the saint will reach a

degree of perfection beyond which he cannot advance. Heaven is a state of eternal progression in knowledge; and, consequently, in amount of happiness. Nor can any one set bounds to the Christian's progress, while he remains in this world, though imperfection will cleave to him. The character of an old disciple must then be laid, the seeds of grace must be sown in the heart, in tender youth. A habit of piety must be formed, or no one, could his life equal that of Methuselah, would be entitled to the distinguished character of an old disciple: and unless this habit be formed in youth, it probably will never be formed. It surely will not be so firm and unyielding. We all know how deeply rooted are habits of vice. A chief reason is, we are early the subjects and votaries of it. These habits are not easily destroyed.

It is difficult, humanly speaking, for grace itself to supplant them. They must be prevented; and this requires early piety. The affections must early begin to flow in a right channel. The pursuit of heaven must be commenced in youth.

II. An old disciple is immovably fixed in the great doctrines of the Gospel. This we might expect from his long tuition in the school of Christ. He has not enjoyed the best instructions, and yet made no progress. Christ teacheth as never man taught. He never had a true disciple whom he did not improve. Nor can a Christian long remain stationary. If a person make no advances, he is only increasing the

evidence that he is not a true disciple. The best evidence that a person is a Christian is gradual progress in holiness. Without this, his pretensions, however high, are vain and empty. Besides, it is the peculiar property of Christian doctrines that they exert an experimental influence. Divine truth is the instrument of sanctification; and the more one experiences of the power of Divine truth, the more firmly rooted and grounded will he be in the doctrines of the Gospel. Hence, saith the Apostle, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace."

The old disciple, therefore, can have no doubt of the truth of those doctrines, whose sanctifying power he has felt on his heart. God has established an indissoluble connection between Christian practice, thus induced, and this confidence. "If any man," said our Saviour, "will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Divine truth, received in the heart, makes an indelible impression. It is fixed—it is permanent. It constitutes the principle of moral action; and a person who has felt its power would as soon cease to act as an intelligent agent, as to doubt the eternal truth of the great doctrines of the Gospel. He would as soon doubt his existence, or the existence of God. The old disciple, therefore, is not liable to revolution in his religious sentiments. He stands like a centre pillar in a building, equally supporting all its parts. While he views

the commotions of the religious world, and the contentions of varying sects and denominations, produced by contradictory opinions, his faith remains fixed. It is this confidence that gives him courage in death. For he knows in whom he has believed. It is this which affords him fortitude in the day of persecution; which robs the rack and the flames of their terrific power. It is this which has led, with cheerfulness, thousands of holy martyrs to the scaffold and the stake.

III. Another trait in the character of an old disciple is his uniform zeal in the cause of Christ. Zeal is essential to Christian discipleship, even in its lowest degree. He is not a Christian who never feels engaged in that cause which cost the agonies and precious blood of the Son of God to establish it in our world. Nor are we without illustrious examples of ardent zeal for Christ among his young disciples. But it is not common to find among them a uniform zeal. It often rises high, and soon expends itself. The young Christian, though he sometimes soar above the clouds, is often seen grovelling in the dust. He falls as low at one time, as he rises high at another. His zeal often arises from an impression suddenly made by a single truth, or some unusual providence, or he knows not how. Often, it is the effect of animal excitement, seldom unmixed with it. But not so with the old disciple. He is not elevated to-day, and proportionally depressed to-morrow. To say the least, the extremes of his feelings are not so wide.

His zeal is unmixed with the fervor of animal feeling. That fervor is already expended. Nor does it arise from an impression made by a single truth: for he feels equally attached to all the truths of the Gospel; nor from some unusual providence, for he is prepared for any. From his doctrinal knowledge spring all his religious affections. And his steady persuasion of the truth and importance of all the Christian doctrines, gives uniformity to the exercise of his affections. It is because the power of the Gospel is not always felt, that stupidity ever seizes the Christian. It is because faith is not always unwavering, that zeal is not always uniform.

The old disciple has formed a habit of feeling, as well as of acting. Aware that an intemperate zeal, a zeal not according to knowledge, will do injury in proportion to the excellency of the cause in which it is excited, he keeps a constant watch over his affections. The discipline which he has established is exercised over every spring of moral action. Hence, he is a stranger to frenzy, is removed from superstition. His course is an even one. His religious life is marked with few inequalities. His Christian graces grow together, and uniform zeal is the result.

IV. The life of an old disciple furnishes the best exemplification of the Christian religion. We have seen in him the Christian graces shining with a steady lustre. Whatever his outward circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse, he lives the religion which he

professes. If prospered, he is humbly thankful; if afflicted, he bows in silent submission. On him the flatteries of the world have lost their influence: its frowns as little affect him. He will not often be beguiled, nor driven from the known path of duty. Like Mnason of Cyprus, he thinks but little of the dangers and trials which await him in the discharge of duty. He does not run uncalled, into danger. He courts not the honors of martyrdom. But he is ready to die in this best of causes. Death, in such a cause, he regards as glorious victory. He is willing to go up to Jerusalem, or elsewhere, where he can aid the mission of an Apostle, or contribute to the spread of the Gospel. Having long served by the standard of the Saviour's cross, he is willing, he rejoices in the privilege, to aid the heralds of its doctrines, to plant it among its enemies. His uniform zeal prompts to uniform efforts. His love of Christ and the glorious interests of his kingdom, is the spring of all his charities and benevolent wishes. These last are not fruitless. If silver and gold he have none, such as he has he gives. He gives his personal exertions, he gives the whole weight of his influence, and what is more than the distribution of the wealth of kingdoms, he gives his prayers. And a mite from his penury, cast into the treasury of the Lord, is more, in heaven's account, than all the abundance of the rich.

But his public services do not excuse him from his more private duties,—they exert a mutual influence.

He loves the Holy Word. The Sabbath is his delight. He loves to sit in the place where God's honor dwelleth. He feeds on the ordinances of the Gospel, and renews his strength. And could you daily visit his closet, you would daily find him there. This is the place of rest to his soul; the consecrated place of the sweetest communion with his God and Redeemer. There is the spot where he opens his heart—recounts his mercies, and melts in gratitude—tells his wants to One able to relieve, and who has covenanted to “withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly,” and is supplied by an invisible, but all-powerful hand.

But no grace shines more conspicuously in an old disciple than that of humility. It is this, rather than any other, which marks the Christian's growth in grace. He that does not grow in humility, makes no advance in holiness. As this can arise only from a sense of unworthiness, and as unworthiness can only be seen by the light of holiness, this grace must shine with peculiar lustre in the old disciple. But for a full display of the Christian graces, see him when languishing on the bed of sickness. How patient under his sufferings! He knows that the hand which appoints the rod of his afflictions, is the hand of his heavenly Father. He remembers the sufferings of Him who shed his blood for the redemption of sinners, and forgets his own. He recalls the words of his Saviour, when about to drain the bitter cup of his agonies, “Not my will, but thine be done,” and bows in silent

submission. He may not be in ecstasy in the hour of death ; but his faith is invigorated—his hope gathers strength—his prospects grow brighter. Some clouds may hover around his mind, only the better to prepare him to enjoy the brightness of day. This is indeed the hour which tries his soul, and puts all his Christian graces to the test. The apartment where the good man is expiring, and especially where the old disciple is yielding up his spirit into the bosom of his Saviour, is the place where the most important and impressive instructions are imparted. Every beholder is carried, as if beyond the mere confines of the two worlds. He forgets, for the moment, that he is an inhabitant of earth. His attention is drawn away from temporal objects, and fixed on eternal scenes. He seems to view the spirit as it is breaking away from its prison of clay, and while passing along the valley of death, and follows it, as it soars aloft, on angels' wings, to regions far distant and unknown. It passes the portals of the kingdom of glory, and there the beholder takes his leave. There too we must now take our leave of our old disciple. Our concern is yet with the living ; and, in the application of our subject, with this congregation.

1. An old disciple is one of the greatest blessings, his life, one of the richest treasures, and his death one of the sorest afflictions to the Church. Nothing in this lower world is so much the object of God's delight. God loves, indeed, with special affection, all who bear

the image of his Son. But he loves more ardently those that are the nearest conformed to his will. He must, then, love most ardently the old disciple, who, through numerous years, has been rapidly growing in grace, and ripening for the kingdom of heaven. In proportion to this affection, are the favors and blessings he bestows; not always of a temporal, but always of a spiritual nature. He, too, who lives the nearest to God, has the greatest interest at the throne of grace.

This interest is chiefly exerted in behalf of the Church. The Church, therefore, will share more largely in spiritual blessings. The influence of an old disciple will be exerted in a variety of ways. *By example.* The example of such a one is a living preacher of the Gospel—active, persuasive, and impressive. *By counsel.* The counsels of an old disciple are a rich treasure. Taught of God, his knowledge is derived from the fountain of light. I hold it as a maxim, that not the most learned, but the most pious man, can afford the best counsel on spiritual subjects. *But especially by his prayers.* Unwavering faith always insures a blessing. What a blessing, then, is an old disciple to the Church! The weight of his character, the value of his counsels, the influence of his example, and the prevalence of his prayers, abating other personal exertions in the best of causes, cannot be fully known, till disclosed at the judgment day. How great a loss, then, to the Church, and even to the world, is the death of an old disciple! His

prayers have a universal influence. They are often answered to the good of different nations and distant ages. Death puts an end to his prayers. They are in remembrance before God, yet they have ceased to ascend. The lips which uttered them are forever sealed. What a loss!

2. The character which we have been contemplating, presents an example worthy of the most assiduous and persevering imitation. By possessing the character of an old disciple, our highest honor, our usefulness, and best interest are promoted. God loves him with peculiar affection; for he best reflects the glory of his image. He will do more good in the world, and thereby secure a large inheritance in heaven. He will leave the richest bequest to bereaved friends. When dead, he will continue to speak, and blessings will descend, in answer to his prayers, while his body sleeps in the grave. Each of these considerations furnishes motives of the most commanding character. But to attain to the character and standing of an old disciple is the peculiar privilege of the young. Nor, indeed, of all the young, for the young die. Often the plant which just begins to shoot is cropped by the frost of death. Not every promising blade is spared to bear the fruit of ripened grain. In the war with death, there is no discharge; nor is there order in his arrests. Yet, without piety in youth, none can become old disciples. They may be Christians, and ripen fast for heaven. But the dis-

tinguished character of an old disciple belongs only to one whose years from early youth to old age mark a gradual and advancing progress in holiness, in knowledge, and heavenly-mindedness.

It cannot have escaped your reflection, that there are few in this congregation who are entitled to the character of old disciples. But I trust I see some. Some who, in early life, became converts to Christ, who are immovably fixed in their belief of the great and distinguished doctrines of the Gospel, and have experienced their sanctifying power on their hearts; who have been gradually advancing in Divine knowledge, and in holiness; who have a uniform and ardent zeal for God, springing from its proper source, and by whom the Christian religion is beneficially and happily exemplified; whose prayers are unceasing, and whose strongest efforts are always commanded by the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

I trust I see others, too, who are fast ripening into that enviable character, and of whom, should they be permitted a long experience, the honorable mention may one day be made, "Behold an old disciple!"

But are there not others, who, on the contrary, though far advanced in life, are yet so far from possessing that character, that they are not even Christians? Instead of being immovably fixed in their views of even the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, are yet in doubt what to believe. Instead of having made great progress in the Divine life, have not yet been

born again. In a word, instead of being old disciples, are not even babes in Christ? How much have such lost, even though they should be saved at last! How much good have they failed to do! How many gems in their crown of glory have they neglected to secure! But this is not all. We have ventured on the supposition, that they will be Christians before they die; that although they cannot be old disciples, they will be disciples in their old age. But this is not certain. Is it even probable? Is not the conversion of an aged person a rare occurrence? Few, comparatively, are ever converted who are impenitent at five-and-forty. What, then, is the prospect of some in this congregation? It is not too late to become Christians; but their efforts must be strong. It will require them to put forth all the energies of their souls.

It will soon be too late to make a successful effort. Their destiny will soon be fixed. Need arguments be used with such to engage them, without an hour's delay, to secure their salvation? That hour, misspent, may be big with consequences—may produce results whose mischief to the soul can never be repaired, never arrested. My hearers, it is too late to trifle with eternal things. But what is it to trifle with everything serious and solemn, if not to feel indifferent about the salvation of the soul? This is trifling with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with the scenes of the Judgment, and the awful retributions of eternity. What, then, shall persuade

such to become in earnest to secure their salvation? Will tears do it? They shall flow. Will prayers do it? They shall not cease to ascend. Will entreaties do it? I would lay me at your feet and beseech you. Ah! infinitely more than this has already been done. Jesus Christ laid down his life to do it; and as from the cross, to-day, bids you secure salvation.

But, when we behold so many youths in this assembly, many of whom making, probably, no serious pretensions to an interest in Christ, and look forward to their more advanced years, hope and fear alternate prevail.

A few years more will decide whether you will or will not be old disciples. A few years more of impenitence, and you cannot possess that most venerable and enviable character, even though you should become Christians. Alas, every year, and every day, you continue impenitent, is rendering your salvation the more unlikely. I beseech the youth of this congregation to consider the privileges they now enjoy, and if impenitent, yet abuse; the hopeful prospects before them, and yet the awful hazards they are running. That they are now enjoying the counsels and the prayers of, I trust and believe, some old disciples, such as have the greatest interest with God, in their behalf. But this advantage, my young friends, you cannot long enjoy. These old disciples will soon have closed their pilgrimage. Some of you, perhaps, are the children of these aged Christians.

And can the thought be endured, that their counsels, anxiety, and their prayers shall cease, and you derive no benefit from them? Ah! what nameless agonies will wring your hearts when you are called to follow them! To you, too, the day of grace will soon be over. Justice stands ready to ascend the throne, and dash forever from your lips the cup of salvation, which has been so often presented you. Time will soon have sped its hours with you. Why, then, should that gaiety and thoughtlessness possess so many charms, which a faithful recollection will one day arraign before you, to enhance your guilt and deepen your woes? What pleasure has sin, which your better judgment and your conscience do not bid you abandon, for the joys of salvation?

Think seriously, before you take another step in the road to ruin. Think seasonably, before a sudden or a premature death shall hand you over to the judgment.

XXI.

THE DUTY AND DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication.”—*EPH. 6 : 18.*

THESE words are found in immediate connection with the description of a Christian soldier. They are, indeed, a part of that description, and express an essential requisite to his complete equipment. The reasons why the Apostle employs a military figure to represent a Christian soldier, are too obvious to require explanation. They arise, indeed, not from the nature of the warfare engaged in, or the weapons which are used, the object to be secured, or the motives which influence to the contest; but from the relations to the Supreme Commander—the necessity of the strictest discipline—of the most exact and ready obedience, and many personal qualities essential to success and to victory. In these respects, I scarcely need remark, that the points of coincidence are obvious and striking, and it is sufficient merely to suggest them.

The duty enjoined in the text is not less a dictate of natural religion, or reason, than a plain command

of Divine revelation. Every believer in the existence of God must admit the propriety and obligation of paying him divine worship, of which prayer is an indispensable and most essential act. Even deists readily concede this. Nor is it any longer matter of discussion, or question, whether an omniscient, infinitely benevolent, and immutable Being can be influenced and moved by the prayers of his dependent creatures. This subject, as well as many others, has at different periods of the world been the theme of laborious discussion among theological writers, not from any doubt in the minds of Christians, but to refute the objections and silence the cavils of infidels; just as volume on volume has been written to prove there is a God, that the Saviour rose from the grave, that there will be a resurrection of all the dead, a judgment, and a future state of endless existence; and a multitude of other topics, now systematically denied by no one whose opinions can have any influence to unsettle the faith of the weakest Christian, or the belief of any reflecting mind. These are points of unprofitable discussion, because uncalled for, in all Christendom, and especially in a Christian congregation.

Not, however, of this character is the duty enjoined in the text; a duty of practical bearing, of the highest essential importance at all times. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This is the most comprehensive,

or rather extensive summary of the duty of prayer, found in the Bible; and supplies us with the following distinct topics of remark, which we will briefly consider as we proceed to state them. And,

I. Prayer is of perpetual obligation, and is never to be intermitted. Its incessantly binding obligation results from the absolute unceasing dependence and necessities of all our race. There is not a moment when either ceases. "In God we live, and move, and have our being;" and "every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights." God, moreover, has peremptorily commanded unintermitted prayer. "Pray without ceasing." "Continuing intent in prayer." "Praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." This, indeed, is said to be impossible; and, therefore, these directions require to be understood in a qualified sense. But the danger lies in giving too extensive a latitude to our qualifications.

These injunctions, it is true, are not to be understood in an absolutely literal sense, as to the particular mode, occasion, or act of prayer. But neither are they to be qualified by the term *habitual*, as left to each to attach his own meaning to that term, and often a very vague meaning. For, with many, this means every Sabbath only; perhaps, with some, only on every communion-occasion, or in seasons of affliction, or when the pressing cares or inviting pleasures of the world do not plead for exception, or disqualify

for the performance of the duty. These are regarded by some as the necessary exceptions, and praying at such stated seasons, or the occurrence of certain occasions, as the habit. But these are mere apologies, to quiet the conscience, while they cheat the soul of grace and heaven. Such should remember that their exceptions to the performance of the duty of prayer, is the habit, and its performance the exceptions. There are, indeed, occasions when some kinds of prayer must necessarily be omitted, and the omission is, of course, no offence—no sin. But it should be borne in mind that the injunctions above cited, and all others similarly expressed, have no reference to any particular kind of prayer. The most essential part of acceptable prayer are not words, but a right state of the heart. It eminently consists in proper desires. The lifting up of these to God in holy aspirations, is offering prayer which he hears, acknowledges, and will answer. This, surely, may be so far unceasing, as to admit but few exceptions. Thought is instantaneous. Consciousness of the need of God's aid and blessing may be unceasing. No business, no employment need interrupt it. No business, no employment should interrupt it. The heart may, and always should be, in a fit state to commune with God. It is wrong when it is not so. Sin is the only interruption. If there ever be a moment when God's assistance and blessing are not required, that is the moment when this kind of prayer may be intermitted. He has

never created a necessity, for which he has not provided a remedy. But he has told us that if we ask not, we receive not. These remarks may suffice on the perpetual obligation of unintermitted prayer, in its most general sense, and as constituting the most essential requisite in all acceptable prayer,—a heart always prepared to offer prayer in any of its modes or kinds, as enjoined in the Bible. Hence,

II. We are led to consider these different modes or kinds. “Praying with *all* prayer and supplication.” The word *all* here is not meant to express the earnestness merely with which prayer should be offered, but denotes the various kinds of prayer commanded. These are, more particularly, and in regard to their stated performance, three; and, in respect to their appropriate seasons, of the same binding obligation as that of the spirit of prayer. The first of these is *secret* prayer, or personal communion with God in secret, or some retired place, for that purpose. Our Saviour has expressed the duty and manner of this kind of prayer thus: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” The allusion here by “closet,” was to the retired place or apartment, which every pious Jew had in his dwelling, expressly appropriated to private devotion. The word, however, is elsewhere rendered “a secret chamber.” The place, however, is not im-

portant. And the word itself signifies any retired place. The object is, to be removed from everything that would distract our thoughts, or be an interruption. There, too, without any embarrassment, or with the utmost freedom and fulness, the whole heart may be laid open to God, under the deepest and most solemn impression, that the unseen Being to whom we pray, sees and perfectly knows all our thoughts, desires, and feelings. "Pray to thy Father, which seeth in secret," with all the confidence of a child.

While the formal part of this duty is not liable to the charge of ostentation, or the suspicion of hypocrisy, there is in the duty itself every motive to the utmost ingenuousness, openness, fulness, and freeness of confession and communion with the omniscient God and kindest Father. How different from the requirements of a confessional, where the whole heart must be laid open to a priest, on the pretended penalty of being accursed of God for the least concealment! The very duty of secret prayer disproves all the blasphemous pretensions of the Papal confessional.

The benefits which result from the practice of secret prayer are numerous and important. It is the life of religion in the soul. It exerts an influence on the whole character. And to a discerning mind, it will not be difficult to arrive at a just conclusion whether a professing Christian faithfully performs or neglects this duty. It will tell on the whole life. This, too, is a duty which may always, and under

all circumstances, be performed. For, however desirable it is to have appropriate places and stated seasons for practising this duty, and nothing but absolute necessity should prevent the practice, yet the formality of retirement is not, in such cases, expressly essential to the acceptable performance of this duty. God looketh upon the heart, and the heart may send up its secret aspirations to God in all places, at all times, and in the midst of all engagements. Besides, there are times, and frequent occasions, when the pious heart feels urgently drawn towards God, and when formal retirement were impossible. This is too plain to every Christian to require particulars. All these instances may properly come under the distinct denomination of secret prayer, or private devotion.

It has, indeed, been said, that stated formal retirement for secret prayer was not expressly enjoined by our Saviour as a duty. And so, also, it has been said, that Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor, and the Bible a book of fictions and impositions. But not the former, any more than the latter, ever came from Christian lips. Duties are not always enjoined by express commands. Obligations of the most binding nature are often otherwise created. The very strongest are sometimes such as arise from what is necessarily implied. The very form of expression used by the Saviour, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray unto thy Father, which is in secret,"

necessarily implied the duty. The practice was already universal among the pious Jews. Our Saviour directed the manner of performing it, and urged the proper motives to its performance, and benefits resulting from a proper observance of it. Obligation could not be more strongly expressed than it was expressed by those words. The same was taught by the parable of the importunate widow. We need not, however, spend time to prove the duty of formal, secret prayer. The unanimous voice and universal practice of all true Christians, in every age, repel the objection as of no force and of infidel origin.

Another kind of stated prayer, and of the same binding obligation, under the necessary appropriate relations and circumstances, is *family* prayer. "Praying with all prayer," clearly implies different kinds of prayer. And the nature of the case would, of itself, point out family prayer as peculiarly appropriate. Nor is it an objection of the least possible weight that it is nowhere expressly commanded. Prayer, in its most general sense, or rather in any particular mode or occasion, as distinct from any other act of worship, is not expressly enjoined. It unquestionably commenced with the creation of man. How, is a question of no importance; but very probably by Divine appointment, intimation, or natural impulse in the pious heart of Adam in his perfect state, and its continuance urged by a thousand pressing arguments and motives after his fall. It hence became universal, by

education, in the families of the pious, and by tradition among all the heathen. For it has always made a part of heathen worship. It has been, and still is, an essential and most prominent part of idolatry. In regard to family prayer, the point now under consideration, we find clear examples of it, and peculiar expressions, and acts, from an early period, and through all time. What less can be made of the morning and evening sacrifice, which all the families of Israel offered to the Lord? These were family, as well as public sacrifices. We cannot reasonably expect more express examples of a practice which had been universal from the beginning of time among the pious. Yet clear intimations of it incidentally appear, as in the case of Abraham, and Joshua, and Job, and several others. We find a fearful denunciation against those families that neglect this social worship, classing them with the heathen themselves. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name."

In the New Testament, we frequently read of pious households, or families, and where worship was held. We read of Paul's conducting this worship in the house of Lydia, during which a spirit of divination was cast out of a damsel present.

It has been remarked, and with convincing force, that the model of prayer which our Lord gave, after the manner of which we are directed to pray, is of this character; intended for family, rather than public

worship. It is a social prayer. As a model, after the manner of which, and as to the substance of it, it may properly be used by an individual, and by an assembly of worshippers. If we regard it as a form of prayer to be repeated in its exact words, it clearly was intended for family worship, and more especially for morning devotion. It was not intended for an individual, evidently from the social manner or plural number which is used, "Our Father," and which is continued throughout. It was not intended for public worship, in the church, because it directs us to ask "day by day" our "daily bread," or as Matthew expresses it, "Give us this day our daily bread," the very day on which the prayer was offered; and churches do not, and cannot, assemble every day to offer it. It was, therefore, evidently intended as a general direction for morning family worship, but suitable, as a model, for evening, changing the petition "Give us this day our daily bread," into thanks for having received it, as well as every other blessing.

An eminent divine remarks, on the social character of this prayer, "What a live coal is applied to devotion, when the solitary *my* Father, and *my* God, is changed into the social *our* Father, and *our* God!" And another, not less distinguished, adds: "How delightful, how interesting, how animating, how encouraging, to every amiable and virtuous emotion, for the pair, thus united, to be able to say, and actually to say, Behold, here are we, and the children whom thou hast

given us!" It were enough, however, to render family worship obligatory on parents and heads of families that the most important benefits result from it. It is so obviously the dictate of reason and propriety, of a due sense of dependence on and obligation to God, and the best interests of both parents and children and domestics, that it was really unnecessary that God should, in so many words, command it. And this is probably the reason why, instead of an explicit injunction, the duty was left to tradition, implication, and example, often the strongest method of inculcating and enforcing a duty; and hence, it has been the practice of all Christians and saints of old, carefully, statedly, and punctually to observe it.

As this duty is so liable to be neglected, is so frequently and extensively, we have reason to believe, neglected by parents professing to be Christians, we will present a few considerations, more distinctly, as furnishing motives to its faithful performance.

The effect of family prayer on the parents themselves is most happy. Its direct influence on them is to enliven their own Christian graces. It deepens their sense of obligation and responsibility. It kindles piety to higher degrees, when those unite in worship who are bound to each other by strong natural ties; having the same interests, the same desires, and the same hopes. Blessings, too, which are common to all the members of the household, and equally needed by all, are the subjects of petition. This community of

interests cannot fail to exalt and enliven piety, where it exists at all. A desire for the best good, the spiritual welfare, the eternal salvation of others, will kindle desire for our own immortal interests, to higher degrees. It therefore acts as beneficially on parents as on their children. They cannot but feel more intensely when worshipping at the family altar, than when engaged in the like exercise alone. The very presence of those so closely united to us, and for whose welfare we feel so deeply, will add importance to our petitions, and increase every devotional feeling. And what creates and throws around parents so many salutary and happy influences, affecting their own life, their example, their consistency, as occupying the station, and discharging the duties of priests in their families? They cannot but feel this influence. It must make them more circumspect, more cautious, more careful that their life is in accordance with their supplication and their devotions: that their efforts second their petitions: that they do not contradict by practice what they urge by their prayers. And few parents but need these guards, these powerful influences, erected by close and constant observers. Moreover, the very word of God will be likely to be neglected even by parents themselves, who neglect family worship. They will, at least, feel a double obligation to attend to that word. Excuses will be often found for its neglect, where family worship is not habitually and punctually practised. The chil-

dren will certainly neglect it; and neglect of the Bible in early life, will be exceedingly likely to grow to utter indifference, if not contempt, in advanced life. If religion is not cultivated in the family, and in the childhood of its members, it will be likely to receive little attention elsewhere. Ordinarily, public worship will have but little influence. Distaste for the latter is usually produced by the neglect of the former. Hence,

The benefit to children and other members of the household cannot be too highly estimated. The families of the pious are, of course, the first and most important schools for the religious education of its younger members. There they receive the first elements of such an education. And what lessons so important to begin with, as well as to continue, as those which are taught in the regular, orderly, and constant performance of family worship? Reverence is early inspired and cultivated for the sacred word of God. The youngest member soon learns to regard it as the very voice of God; and the prayer that is offered as directly speaking to that great invisible Being. And though it be first from the principle of imitation that the formal act of worship is produced, and which is almost from the earliest infancy, it soon grows into the feeling of reverence, both for God and his word. This feeling, if properly cultivated, seldom loses its influence. But this will not be without the uniform habit of family worship. There can, of

course, be no such act as imitation, when there is no example—nothing to imitate. Family worship, therefore, is indispensable to early religious education. And what is equally conducive to the proper regulation of a family, as the constant maintenance of family worship? What produces such a spirit of subordination throughout a household, as the acknowledged dependence of its head on that infinite, Supreme Being, to whom all are subject? When it is seen that those whom these children are required to obey, show their own obligation to him whom they acknowledge as their Sovereign, and daily regard as entitled to their obedience and service. Here, too, the principle of imitation exerts a powerful and happy influence. When children witness subordination to a higher authority in their parents, they readily feel and cheerfully yield subordination to parental authority. Divine authority then combines with parental, to give it force; salutary restraints are more cheerfully and readily submitted to; motives to obedience are clothed with greater power. And what should be specially remarked, such parents as habitually practise the duty of family worship will receive the Divine blessing. The blessing promised to Abraham, in a similar case, will be experienced by those who follow his example.

As to the frequency and stated periods of performing this duty, I scarcely need remark, that propriety and reason itself point out the beginning and the close

of each day. The reasons are too obvious to require a statement of them.

I mention a third kind, which is *public* prayer. This has always made an essential and no small part of public worship. Without it, there probably would be no public worship, and hence the Sabbath itself would be wholly neglected, would pass without any recognition of its sacredness. And whatever it might be to a few individuals, and they would probably be few indeed, the community would forget their dependence on God, if not his very existence be blotted from the memory. Every command of God, therefore, to keep holy the Sabbath-day; every divine requisition on a community to worship God at all; every precept and binding example to assemble on the Sabbath, or to assemble together for worship every instance of commendation on a nation for its virtue, and denunciation of judgments for its vices and wickedness, and the uniform and universal practice of all God's people, from the earliest to the present age,—all furnish so many arguments and motives to assemble together to offer to God the united homage of their hearts: all give it the sanction and the force of a positive ordinance and command of Almighty God. Communities are as dependent on God as individuals. And their prosperity is placed on the same conditions.

All the advantages which spring from private prayer, and family prayer especially, may arise to a community from public prayer. Communities are

but larger families. Intercession is an important part of every kind of prayer. A Christian seldom prays for himself without making others the subject of his prayer. Examples of this are too numerous to be recited or particularly referred to, while express commands are not few, to pray in behalf of rulers and nations. "I exhort, therefore," says Paul, "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

Again. Prayer on *special occasions*. Examples of this are numerous. Under the old dispensation, what is now regarded and observed as occasional only, was made a stated season of prayer, equally as those which we have already considered. There were seasons of fasting, which God expressly commanded, and for which purpose he designated and appointed a particular day.

The acts of worship on such occasions consisted chiefly in prayer—in the confession of individual and public sins. And although our Saviour neither expressly ratified that appointment, nor made a new one, yet he sanctioned the observance, by the clearest implication. He said, "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward

thee openly." That is, avoid the ostentatious parade and display of the Pharisees. It was proper to observe such occasions, and they have been observed ever since. The visitation or apprehension of special judgments furnish occasions for special prayer, that they may be removed or averted. Such seasons too were observed by God's ancient people, and have been in every age of the Church. They have been appointed, and properly, by national authority. Populous Nineveh was, by that means, saved from utter destruction, and the whole Hebrew nation, in more than one instance. Nor have they lost their efficacy, since God has often heard the united supplications of a people, and removed or withheld his afflicting hand.

The same remarks apply to occasions of thanksgiving. Like fasts, they were divinely appointed. Their propriety and binding obligation have lost none of their force by lapse of time.

I add, once more : Prayer for *special blessings*, and particularly for spiritual blessings, or, in other words, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a Church and congregation.

The importance and indispensable necessity of this, are not left to be inferred from reason and a proper sense of dependence on God. These indeed solemnly enforce the duty. They are special blessings, and should be specially sought. It ought to be enough, that they may be obtained by the most earnest importunity. It is a privilege which should be most grate-

fully improved. God has no richer blessings to bestow on apostate men, than the converting and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit; than adding to the number of those who shall be saved, and training souls for the kingdom of heaven. Ought not, then such blessings to be objects of special prayer and earnest importunity? But this duty, so reasonable in itself, and to which a proper sense of dependence on God and all the impulses of the new heart so powerfully prompt, is not left on this ground. God has expressly connected this blessing with special prayer, leading of course to special effort. With direct reference to this very blessing, the promise of the Holy Spirit to revive his ancient Church, God expressly said: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." The whole history of God's dealings towards that people shows, that a condition or preparation on their part, in every instance, preceded the bestowment of special spiritual blessings. This point is forcibly illustrated in the following passage from the pen of the Prophet Malachi, at a time than when the people of Israel were never in a state of deeper or more daring rebellion against God, and which only showed the greater necessity of repentance and reformation: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts; if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

What was then literally meant by bringing all the tithes into the storehouse, now means, in the proper application of this direction and command, a return to the faithful performance of all religious duties, and to that more spiritual service, which was denoted by the offering of sacrifices and other gifts. Such a return is indispensable to the experience of the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

The bestowment of these blessings is sometimes denoted by God's return to his people; but the condition is, "Return ye, every one, from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." "The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you; but, if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." And when they, in their trouble, did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, he was found of them; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, *i. e.*, the covenant they had entered into, to seek the Lord God; "for they had sworn, with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them."

But we need not refer you to particular instances. It has, in all ages of the Church, been the established method of the Divine conduct towards her; the earnest prayer, "O Lord, revive thy work," has always preceded such a work. Under the new or Gospel dispensation, this is a prominent fact. How was it, just preceding that wonderful and glorious display of Divine power and grace, on the day of Pentecost? Cast your

thoughts back a moment to that period. It is full of instruction and encouragement on this point. Fix your eyes on the Apostles and the Christians associated with them, that first Christian Church, and the only proper model of all others. Their example combines all the force of the Divine precepts, while it furnishes proofs of the fulfilment of all God's promises on this subject. Follow them to the place of their constant resort, and you learn their object. But let me relate it in the words of the inspired narrator himself. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey; and when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Here, let it be remarked, that this was not a special occasion. True, they had just parted from their best friend to see him no more on earth. Jesus had just ascended to the right hand of God in heaven. This afflictive event gave energy and earnestness to their prayers. But this was not the occasion of their assembling together for prayer. It was a place of resort for this purpose before that. The place was already familiar to them. It was probably the very chamber, or large upper

room, where the Saviour met the Apostles and instituted the holy Sacrament of the Supper; and where, with equal probability, he had often met with them and his other disciples after his resurrection. The words "where abode," in the account just read, show that they were in the constant habit of meeting there for prayer; for it could not mean that they all lived there. Their number, being not less than one hundred and twenty, renders such a supposition absurd. But they were in the constant practice of meeting there for prayer. It was the prayer-room of that infant Christian Church, and where the male and female members were in the constant practice of meeting for social worship. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

And this fact is mentioned in the closest connection with that ever-memorable outpouring of the Spirit to which we have referred. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all, with one accord, in one place," or in *that* place, or *the* place, *i. e.*, the place before referred to, which is the more literal rendering. Besides, they were *all* there, without any note of distinction between the Apostles and the rest of the disciples. Nor would any of them be absent on the occasion of so important a feast as Pentecost. And what was the result? It is immediately stated. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." True, there was

much that was miraculous in the scenes of that day. But that affects not the point now under consideration, which is the connection which God has been pleased to establish between earnest, believing prayer, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That promise is as full and explicit *now*, as it was *then*. It is also true, that they were led to *expect* a wonderful manifestation of God's Spirit. There was, however, no hint, so far as we can find, that the day of Pentecost was to be the season of it. And have not Christians *now*, the same ground of encouragement—the same promise? “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find,” even the Holy Spirit. “For God is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.” “Therefore, I say unto you,” said the Saviour, “what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” This expresses strong faith indeed. But is not the promise of God sufficient ground of such faith? Not only is there no efficient faith where there is not this expectation, and even assurance, but anything less than this, is direct distrust of the promise of God.

Here, then, we have all the requisites, all the assurances, and all the encouragements to such a glorious work of grace as is denoted by the outpouring of the Spirit, for such a work among us. The same preparation would secure the same happy results, to every Church and people, as was experienced on the day of

Pentecost, abating what was miraculous on that occasion; the same quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

That preparation is prayer—the prayer of faith, earnest prayer—prayer that involves strong expectation—an expectation which prompts, and is essential to, every appropriate and proper effort—combined, united effort.—continuing or perseverance in prayer and supplication. And finally, the prayer of the whole house of Israel; of all the disciples, solemnly associated together as a Church; men and women, as in the first Christian Church, at Jerusalem. Such a state, and such a course, never did fail to bring down the special blessings of God's Holy Spirit on a Church and people; and never will fail. For a failure would falsify the most direct and explicit promises contained in the sacred Book.

It now remains to apply our subject to practical purposes.

1. The individual who never or seldom prays, is not a Christian. He lacks the most decisive evidence, and that evidence without which it is impossible there should be any other. Prayer is the first breathing of a regenerated soul. Earnest importunity, at least, usually, if not always, precedes that all-essential change. It is impossible for a sinner to have any proper conviction of his true condition, without calling earnestly on God to have mercy on him; and no less impossible, that he should experience his mercy,

and not habitually pray. If we place it on the ground of a Divine command, there is not a plainer or more oft-repeated one in the Bible. But this is not the only ground. All the impulses of a renewed heart prompt to it. A child can no more live and grow without its appropriate nourishment, than the new-born soul without that grace which prayer alone can procure. "Behold, he prayeth," marked the time of Paul's conversion. And no soul ever was converted that did not breathe forth his humble prayers to God. It is as unreasonable to believe the contrary, as it is unscriptural and contradictory to uniform and universal experience.

Nor is this evidence necessary only to prove the fact of true conversion. It is no less essential to establish the fact of a renewed state in all after-life. It is not only essential to growth in grace, but to the very existence of the principle of grace. How can it be otherwise? What an absurdity, what a self-contradiction, that a Christian should live in the neglect, or only occasional employment, of the only means of communication between God and his own soul! The only means of obtaining every needed blessing! For prayer is the only mode of such communication, the only means of obtaining the Divine blessing. Hence, who is that man who the word of God declares, "will not delight himself in the Almighty, and who will not always call upon God?" It is he whom that word brands a hypocrite. Secret prayer, especially, comes not within the view

of his fellow-men; and, destitute of real piety, such acts of devotion have no charms for him. He has no taste for such an employment. He may be forced to take the attitude of prayer, during some season of special affliction; but, taking no delight in that exercise, he will discontinue it, as soon as God's chastising hand is lifted from him, or an accusing conscience is silenced.

These remarks are made with a more particular reference to private or secret prayer. But so far as the obligation is regarded, they apply with equal appropriateness, and equal force, to every kind of prayer, in its appropriate season, relations, and circumstances; to family prayer, and public prayer, and prayer on particular occasions, and special prayer for special blessings. These are all enforced with the same weight of Divine authority; are of the same perpetual obligation. There are the same reasons, the same urgent demands, for the discharge of these duties, as it respects the procurement of Divine blessings, as in the case of private or secret prayer. Indeed, so far as the number of dependent beings and needy subjects is of consideration, social prayer, family or public, is enforced by additional and superior reasons, over that of private prayer, inasmuch as there are more to be benefited, each of whose necessity is as pressing, as that of any individual. In a family, for instance, the interests of all its members are the same; the blessings which are needed, are the same; and prayer is the only appointed mode or means of obtaining them. The bless-

ings needed and asked for, in family prayer, are of the highest and most important nature.

They are not merely temporal prosperity, worldly good;—though all these come from God, but which we often see prayerless and ungodly families possess and enjoy, and which might lead some to conclude, that prayer has little or nothing to do with such things; forgetting, that the “using of the world as not abusing it,” is of infinitely greater importance than the largest possessions; and that “the favor of God is life, and his loving kindness is better than life;” better than the possession of all the world;—but they are blessings, which, while they overlook not the interests of this world, and are, indeed, essential to their highest enjoyment and best use and improvement, have a supreme relation to eternity,—another state of existence, when removed from this; another world, when called forever away from this. Are these blessings likely to be secured by a prayerless family? likely to be possessed by the members of a household where family worship is neglected? Where the morning and the evening sacrifice is not regularly and habitually offered? These questions require no distinct or formal answer. They contain their own answer. What Christian parent, or head or master of a family or household, can forego the privilege, not to say disregard the solemn obligation, of family prayer? Similar remarks are equally appropriate to all other prayer, in the difference of peculiar relations and circumstances only.

But I have no time to make and apply them ; and observe,

2. Nothing which is not absolutely unavoidable, should be allowed to interfere with the performance of the duty, or duties, which have been the prominent subjects of discourse to-day. As it respects the spirit of prayer, or a state of heart prepared or favorable for that exercise, nothing, at any time, should be allowed to suppress it, or disqualify for it. To allow the contrary, would be to justify or excuse sin. For nothing but sin can prevent communion with God, or disqualify for the exercise of prayer. No lawful business—no lawful mode of transacting it—no innocent employment—no providences of God, can unfit the soul for prayer. As it regards, therefore, the spirit of prayer, or a right state of heart for prayer, the commands, “to pray always,” to “pray without ceasing,” and, “in everything let your requests be made known to God,” are to be understood in their literal and most unqualified sense. Such a spirit, such a preparation of heart, can only be prevented by a wrong spirit, a wrong state of heart ; only positive sin can prevent. This, I presume, is obvious, and will be admitted by every one.

In regard to all other kinds of prayer—prayer which requires an external or oral expression, or observance of a particular season or place,—necessary interruptions may often occur. The stated worship of the closet, so far as the formal act is concerned,

cannot always be performed. Family, social, and public worship cannot always be observed, as the proper seasons return. But the only justifiable cause is the demand of some paramount or absolute necessity arising from some other cause. None of the ordinary claims of the world, its usual occupations, however lawful in themselves, much less its pleasures, or moral indisposition, can furnish a valid excuse. As it respects the prayers of the sanctuary, or the public worship of God on the Sabbath, other solemn commands, and no less solemn interdicts, come in, to enforce compliance. Non-attendance on public worship, when God's house is open for it and stern necessity does not prevent, is a violation, not of one, but of many obligations. Attendance on particular occasions is not now placed on the same ground as formerly, when it was matter of positive injunction, as the fast and feast days of the Jews. But our Saviour, as we have seen, gave his sanction, and, by fair implication, even enjoined, especially the former, leaving the particular season to the indications of Providence, and the dictates of sound piety. This affects not the nature or obligation of the duty. In like manner, social prayer, by members of the Church, is not enjoined by any express command, in so many words. But if the example of primitive Christians, of the first organized Christian Church, and even of Christ himself and his Apostles, furnish a rule which binds Christians to its observance now,—and I think

no Christian will question it—then are such meetings of binding obligation, when attendance is practicable.

And here let us pause to indulge one reflection, which should awaken the liveliest gratitude, and kindle the gracious affections of every Christian. And it is this. In all those kinds of prayer, which require the observance of particular times and places, when necessity prevents such observance, God is pleased to accept the spirit of prayer—the silent breathings—the holy aspirations of the heart. How cheering, how animating, how does it enliven devotion, when a little company only is permitted to meet for worship in the house of God, or in the prayer-room, to be assured, that while others are absent by unavoidable necessity, they are present in spirit! Though their persons are absent, their hearts are there. The presence of large numbers is animating, even though ignorant of the spirit they bring with them. But how much more so the confident persuasion, that multitudes of hearts are present, mingling their prayers and praises before the same mercy-seat!

I remark once more. The course appears a plain one to obtain the special blessings of the Holy Spirit. This implies an earnest desire for those blessings, as of the highest importance. And surely there can be none of greater importance than those which are denoted by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Such a desire leads to strong expectation of those blessings; such a strength of faith as prompts the Christian who

prays for them to believe that he receives them, according to the direction and assurance which our Saviour gave to his disciples. "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. All things whatever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." All that is required is simple reliance on his promises. And without this, who ought to expect to receive any Divine favor, much less the greatest blessing God has to bestow on sinful men? Anything short of implicit, unwavering reliance on God's promises is distrust, which is one of the greatest affronts that can be given him. The faith required, too, must be so strong as to lead to appropriate effort. And when did such a condition of God's people, such a state of the Church, ever fail of success? How many instances are there of such a degree of success as filled the supplicants themselves, as well as all beholders, with absolute astonishment! We have more than the naked promises of God. Those promises have had the most ample accomplishment, in every age of the Church, ever since there was a Church. The glorious scenes of Pentecost are but a single example. Equally astonishing ones soon followed that day, and they have never ceased to occur, whenever and wherever the Church has been prepared for them. God challenges a trial of the truth of his promises on this point: "Prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that

there shall not be room enough to receive it." The truth of the same promise has been repeatedly demonstrated since, as often as the Church has been prepared to receive the promised blessing—as often as special prayer has been made for it. God loves to have the truth of his promises thus put to the test. He loves to prove to his people that he is more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them who ask, than earthly parents are to give good things to their children. And when they speak often one to another, on subjects relating to his kingdom, the conversion of sinners, and the advancement of his cause, he loves to listen, and to record it in his book of remembrance. Even while they are yet speaking, he will hear.

One reflection, and I close. How many souls may now be on the very verge of eternal ruin, whose salvation under God may be depending on the fervent effectual prayers of this Church, while the Spirit of God is ready to kindle such prayer in the heart of every Christian who shall earnestly and believingly look to him for it! What a Pentecostal season might be before us! What joy might soon be awakened in every Christian's heart! what joy resound through all our dwellings! yea, what joy among the very angels of God, at the conversion of multitudes of sinners among us!

Brethren, it is a question of life and death—the eternal salvation, or endless destruction of a large portion of

this congregation, which now demands our most solemn attention. How painful the reflection, that many with whom we may have been intimately associated; who, for years, came with us to this house of God, may already have gone to perdition, through our own neglect, our apathy, our coldness, our want of faith in the power of prayer; and hence, distrust of the truth of God in the promises and assurances of his word. And shall others perish through the same neglect and want of concern in their behalf? Can we endure the thought of meeting them in the last day, and, as they receive their doom, and turn away from the bar of the eternal Judge, see them casting their eyes on us, and saying, "We perish forever, because it was our lot to live among those who cared not for our souls?" Verily, they will have no excuse, but oh, what a solemn rebuke of our neglect! If God will require the blood of souls that perish through an unfaithful ministry, will Christians be guiltless, if sinners are lost through their remissness, if they neglect those means which God put in their hands to save them? It is not the mere publication of Divine truth that saves sinners. That truth must be made the power of God, must produce a regenerating and sanctifying effect; and this is in answer to the believing, persevering prayer of his people. Let us, then, my beloved brethren, ye disciples of Christ, take this subject into more serious consideration than it has commanded for years

past. Our prayers must soon cease to ascend. Our lips soon be sealed in death. But to-day we may offer them; and we may lodge prayers in heaven, which will not only bring down the richest blessings on our own souls, and the souls of others still within the reach of mercy, but which will be answered long after we have gone down to our graves.

XXII.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

A COMMUNION DISCOURSE.

“God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—GAL. 6 : 14.

I HAVE selected these words, as the theme of discourse this morning, independently of the immediate connection in which they stand, or the particular sentiment which the Apostle was inculcating in the passage in which they occur. The Cross of Christ.

This phrase is one of most affecting import, of most extensive meaning, of most important instruction. Literally, the cross was an instrument of the most ignominious, long-protracted, aggravated torture, unto death. The suffering of the cross was the punishment, among the Romans, of slaves and the vilest criminals. It was a part of the sentence against those condemned to suffer this mode of death, that they should carry the cross on which they were to die, to the place of execution. Thus, our Saviour was compelled to bear his cross up to Calvary. The suffering is often pro-

tracted for days; usually to two or three. In the case of our Saviour, it was of unusually short continuance, during, probably, about three hours only. But as the object of his agonies was effected, not by their duration, but rather their extremity, and as he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again, and no man, as he himself had said, could take it from him, so when all was accomplished for which he came to our world, he yielded up his life; or as one of the Evangelists most significantly and appropriately expresses it, in the true meaning of the original, "he dismissed his spirit."

But the term cross, has another and different meaning, though naturally derived from its literal one. While it shows the manner of the Saviour's death, it stands for all the infinitely important consequences which flowed from that event. It is only another word to express the whole Gospel; the entire plan of human salvation. Every purpose of mercy, from eternity, with all the gradually unfolding plan of our redemption, during the former dispensation of types and shadows, centred in the cross, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; while all hope to our dying race beamed forth from "the cross of Christ." Around that cross we, my brethren, assemble this morning, to behold by the eye, not of fancy, but of faith, some of its wonders, and contemplate some of its blessings. And as the all-attractive object, it is proper, and

peculiarly appropriate to the occasion now before us, to direct our thoughts

1. To the suffering Son of God, as he hung bleeding on the cross. To recall his death, not merely in its results, but its agonies, is certainly one object of the sacramental ordinance of the Supper.

Hence, the broken bread and the poured-out wine, the appointed emblems of his broken body and his shed blood. "For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, till he come." Besides, the design of his death, and the nature, and especially the enforcement of the glorious doctrines and facts proceeding from that event, in an eminent degree depend on the severity of his agonies, and our deepened impressions of them. For although it was not the amount or degree of suffering in which the atonement consisted, but the blood that was shed, yet the intensity of the Saviour's agonies cannot fail to deepen our impressions of the wonderful love of God, in giving his only begotten and dearly beloved Son to die for us; the exceeding sinfulness of sin and demerit of the sinner; the inflexibility of God's justice, in rendering such a sacrifice necessary, in order to the sinner's pardon; and although Christ's humanity only could suffer, while his Deity was at the same instant infinitely happy and glorious, yet we can easily conceive that the matchless dignity of his character, the intense sensibility of his immaculate holiness, and the ignominious

as well as cruel mode of his death, qualified him to endure a degree of suffering, which no mere man ever did, or ever can experience, to whatever tortures his body might be subjected. But bodily suffering was not all, was not the bitterest ingredient in the cup which he drank ; his mental agony far exceeded this. No mind can conceive his anguish, as he cried, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Amazing, too, must have been the torture occasioned by the nails which fastened his extremities to the wood, by which his whole weight was sustained, and of the spear which penetrated to his heart ; but this (we cannot, indeed, call it light) we may call less, far less, than the anguish he felt, when his infinitely affectionate Father hid his face from him, which forced the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !" Yes, brethren, to recall and ponder upon this spectacle of agony, is one object of the ordinance before us. We meet here to see re-enacted, so far as the symbols which the great Sufferer himself appointed can do it, the shameful, the cruel, the intensest agonies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Kindly did he spare his disciples, with the exception of the beloved John, the pain of witnessing his sufferings on the cross ; and even John was included, when he said to them in the garden, as Judas the traitor approached him, "If ye seek me, let these, my disciples, go their way." They, indeed, are said to have forsaken him, but they had his permission. Yet John's love was stronger

than death; either the endurance of his own, or the witness of his Lord's; and he went with him to the Judgment Hall, and thence to the bloody scene on Calvary.

Nor do we marvel that "all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." Nor that "all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." But far greater the wonder, that those who live under the full instructions of the Gospel, who even believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Highest, and that he died that sinners might be saved, and that without the shedding of his blood there is no remission of sin, and are still impenitent, can yet contemplate that scene unmoved, as though it concerned them not. To multitudes, alas, this probably seems an unmeaning ceremony. Yet, on what it represents, hangs the possibility even of the salvation of any soul. The Saviour graciously instituted this ordinance, that even his disciples might have special opportunities of bringing the subject of his death more distinctly to their view; for even they might, if not utterly forget it, but too seldom recall it, and fail to experience its happy influence on their hearts and lives. The object is not merely to awaken sympathy with the sufferings of the Saviour. It is impossible for a heart that is not dead to all sensibility not to sympathize. And it should deeply sympathize. A

heart that does not sympathize, does not love, cannot grieve, nor feel any other proper emotion. But it does not expend itself in tears.

2. The cross of Christ furnishes a spiritual mirror, in which all the features in the great work of salvation are distinctly presented to view. The sacrifice of Christ brings to view the counsels of the eternal Godhead. It is the result of a wisdom which can be referred to no other source. With this direct reference, the Apostle terms it the wisdom of God, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, unto our glory. And the wisdom of the plan has engaged the most prying researches of the angels, ever since it was proclaimed. And however the preaching of the cross may appear foolishness to them that perish, yet to them which are saved, it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. The cross of Christ displays the love of God to the most intense degree. For what can exceed the love which could lead to such a sacrifice, to make the salvation of sinners possible? Could it burn more ardently than when it bore the Son of God to the cross, on which to die so cruelly, and yet so cheerfully?

It shows us, too, that nothing less than such a mighty sacrifice could have availed to lay the foundation of the sinner's pardon. Nothing short of the death of Christ, God's only Son, could have made a sufficient atonement. For any excess of suffering would have impeached the very justice of God, and

even his love for his only Son. It was love which successfully opposed the exactions of justice towards the sinner, the full weight of which fell on the innocent head of the Ransom. "For, scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Truly, God laid open his very heart, when his Son bled on the cross. We can hardly conceive of higher proof of love in the Father, than to give up his Son to such suffering; merely witnessing it, while, at the same time, he poured a full flood of consolation into his bleeding heart. And yet higher proof than this was exhibited in that awful hour. Previously to this, an angel was permitted to descend from heaven to strengthen him in his dreadful conflict in the Garden. But in his last more dreadful agonies, he was not only denied that aid, but even his tender and affectionate Father, in whose bosom he had lain, hid his face from him. Even that greatest pang of all could not be spared him. And what was that but another proof of love to man? For without that pang, he could not have been redeemed. The price would have lacked an adequate value.

And here we see what sin is, and what the sinner

deserves. Oh, how erroneous a judgment we form, how infinitely short of the truth our estimate of sin! Here we see it in its odiousness; in its damning consequences. The Son of God must tread the wine-press of the wrath of God alone; yes, alone; for his Father must withdraw from him. We could not have more convincing, certainly not stronger proof of the odious nature and tremendous consequences of sin, or the sinner's desert, were we to visit the regions of the lost. Hell itself can furnish no evidence more powerful, might I not say, equally powerful, as the cross of Christ. And must we actually experience the miseries of that world, before we will feel its force, and repent of it? Is there a sinner here, who will not be convinced by the argument here presented? With the erroneous views and slight impressions which the impenitent have of the nature and character of sin, how can they account for the deep humiliation and amazing sufferings of the Saviour? What must they think, even, of the conduct of his Father towards him? Do they ever reflect, with candor, on the greatness of the sacrifice which was made, when Christ died on the cross, the amazing agonies he endured, and seriously inquire the necessity of such sufferings? And what other conclusions can they draw, than that sin is an infinite evil, and justly exposes to a most fearful and endless punishment?

But it is to Christians that the subject and the occa-

sion now make their appeal. And if we are entitled to that character, we have seen something of the evil of sin in our own hearts and lives, and tasted something of its bitterness, in the accusations of an awakened conscience, and deep conviction of just exposedness to the endless wrath of the sin-hating and sin-punishing God. And how should a view of the cross, to-day, deepen such impressions on our hearts? To rekindle repentance is one of the objects of this ordinance. The very faith that is necessary to discern the Lord's body, cannot fail to produce this effect. Nor can there be any improvement of Christian character where this effect is not produced. Hence,

3. The cross of Christ comprises all the means of grace, and the most powerful motives to employ them. These means are the truths of the Gospel. Neither are sinners convicted or converted, nor Christians sanctified, but by means of Divine truth. And from the cross of Christ all these, as we have seen, emanate and shine forth with peculiar splendor. The law of God, which is the grand instrument of awakening, convicting, and converting sinners, is exhibited and enforced with a power far more irresistible than is seen in its written characters—in its read precepts. On the cross it is written in characters of blood. It is there shown in all its strictness and inviolability. We there have an example of its holiness and condemning power, and its awful consequences, exhibited nowhere else. We see its dreadful penalty enforced on the holy

Saviour, God's own Son, as the sinner's substitute. He bore its curses, as those curses are not seen, even in the world of woe. He experienced a despair when, at the hiding of his Father's face, he uttered those heart-penetrating words, just at the moment of yielding up his spirit, expressive of an agony, exceeding the despairing wailings of the lost, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Ah, sinner, that was only the law carried into full effect. That the penalty of its violation. The very law which you have so often violated; the penalty which you have as often incurred.

What should break and melt the sinner's heart if not such a view? No other means has ever been more frequently blessed to the conviction of the sinner than the solemn scenes of a communion occasion. And hard indeed must be the heart which will not yield itself to the Saviour, at such an exhibition of compassion and love towards sinners, when they see the blow fall on him which was their due, but which he so readily and cheerfully received in their behalf.

For its happy influence on Christians, and as a means of sanctification and growth in grace, I need only to appeal to their own experience. If this cannot testify in their favor, by producing a greater weanedness from the world, a more active piety, a marked advance in holy living, the inference is strong, that their attendance on such occasions as this, has been without the wedding-garment.

Once more. The cross of Christ furnishes a perfect example to Christians, amid the various trials to which they may here be subjected. He indeed is their pattern in all things. He had not those causes of conflict which Christians often find the severest,—that warfare between corrupt nature and grace, which so often mars the peace of the Christian, and which ends only with life itself. For he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He knew no sin; guile was not found in his mouth. Yet he was the subject of all the innocent infirmities of human nature. His whole life was a life of trial. He was an object of the most wanton persecutions which ever stained the annals of the world, even while an infant in the cradle, and which, in the hope of including him, resulted in the bloody death of children of two years old and under, throughout the province of the infamous Herod. And his whole life, in this respect, is affectingly told in one short sentence, “A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “Yet, he was as one that was dumb.” “He opened not his mouth,” in the language of complaint or repining. And it is in express allusion to the agonies of his cross, that both he and his inspired Apostles often enforced submission, in every trial which should fall to the lot of Christians; as well as that he should be their example, amid all the difficulties and dangers to which a profession of his name might expose them. Our Saviour often said, that “whosoever would come after him, must take up his cross and follow

him. He must deny himself, and take up his cross;” must readily submit to all the afflictions and sufferings which might befall him in the service of God, even to death itself. The Saviour’s course, and the Saviour’s end, must be his guide and example, however difficult the duties to be performed, or painful the sufferings to be endured.

This was eminently exhibited by him, during the hours of his last sufferings. The cross now stands for all the shame, the trials; and severest sufferings which can befall the Christian. And from the cross, through the ordinance which is about to be administered, every lesson necessary for us to know is given, and enforced by the most solemn and affecting scene which men or angels ever witnessed. And this is the scene which is now to pass in review before the eye of faith, in the ordinance before us. In more improving, as well as affecting circumstances, we cannot be placed, till faith give way to open vision. Hither let us bring all our burdens, and especially all our sins, to be confessed anew, and anew repented of; all our worldliness to be crucified; all our weak resolutions to be confirmed; our trials and sorrows, and learn how to bear them. We are here to renew our covenant vows; to reconsecrate ourselves to our Lord and Master; to recall, as far as possible, the instances in which we have broken them, and pour out the tears of sincere penitence. Our own guilt constituted no small part of the awful load which bore so heavily on

his holy soul, when, under the awful pressure, he yielded it up. And every sin we commit is virtually crucifying him afresh, and putting him to open shame. It is to reproach him before the world, when openly committed; and grieving him, if concealed in the heart.

Let us remember, too, that we are in covenant with each other; that we have engaged to seek and promote, as far as possible, the spiritual good of each other; to abstain from what grieves and offends a brother or sister; to recommend, by a godly life and conversation, to those without, the religion we profess.

With such views, and feelings, and resolutions, and the eye of faith steadily fixed on the Saviour in his agonies, let us gather around the cross.

It was while breaking the bread, and pouring out the cup, he said, "This is my body, which is broken for you; this is my blood." And, "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." It is, indeed, love which we celebrate; but it is dying love. Come, then, for all things are now ready.

XXIII.

THE "BUILDING OF GOD, A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS."

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS REVIEWED.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. 5: 1-4.

THE precise ideas designed to be inculcated by the words now read, are confessedly involved in much obscurity; and yet, from the manner in which the Apostle introduces the subject, one would be led to expect the announcement of truths generally known and well understood. "For we know," &c. Little light is thrown upon the passage by the preceding or following context. It is, indeed, obvious, that the Apostle has direct reference to those eternal scenes, which await the souls of the righteous after their departure from this world, and their immediate admittance into the presence of Christ; hence, he adds, in the conclusion of this subject, "Therefore, we are always confident,

knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The general design of the Apostle, in the text, is obvious: it was to encourage and comfort Christians in their severe trials and afflictions, to which he refers in the closing part of the preceding chapter; but this removes none of the difficulties which seem to be thrown about this passage; the most embarrassing of which are the following. What is meant by "a building of God, a house not made with hands?" What by its being "eternal in the heavens?" and at the same time, "from heaven?" What by "being clothed upon with that building or house?" And lastly, when does all this take place? To all these questions, different answers have been given, by distinguished commentators, both ancient and modern. The subject is confessedly one of deep interest. Many, it is true, have indulged in much idle speculation. Where the Scriptures are silent, it becomes us to be so. Yet no one subject is more frequently brought to view in them than the one now introduced to our consideration. Nor is there a subject which has a more direct bearing on the hopes, the prospects, and the character of the Christian. It is not enough to believe, merely that a state of future and eternal happiness and glory awaits all who have an interest in Christ; when it is possible to have clear and distinct views, as to particulars connected

with that subject; though to prepare for such a state, is, or should be, the supreme object or chief aim of every man.

And when subjects relating to our eternal destination are presented in revelation, circumstantially and with a degree of particularity and minuteness, it is our duty and privilege to give them all the consideration of which we are capable. Nor can the full force of the motives of the Gospel be felt without such consideration. Such is the subject introduced by the words read as my text.

In respect to the different constructions which have been placed on the text, perhaps a proper examination of them will show, that while each contains some error, there may be much truth in them all. Our notice of each, however, must be brief. But if a spirit of inquiry be awakened, the exercise, we trust, will not be without profit.

The first interpretation we shall notice, is the following: that by this "building of God, an house not made with hands," the reference is to the resurrection-body of the saint. And that the period to which the Apostle refers is, of course, the last day. And by its being *from* heaven, and eternal *in* the heavens, is denoted only, that it is the immediate production of God, who is in heaven; and the immortality of the renovated body, and its eternal residence in heaven. This is the opinion of many commentators, and probably the more generally received one. This construction is clearly liable

to very great, and to my mind, unanswerable objections. The declaration, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," evidently forbids a reference to scenes so distant after death as the resurrection. Hence, some, who have adopted this construction, suppose that the Apostle believed that the resurrection, and the end of all temporal things, were at hand. This inference, indeed, would be natural, and almost irresistible, on the supposition that the text refers to the resurrection-body. For it seems plainly to imply something that is to take place immediately at death. "For we know that if (or *when*, as the Greek particle may be rendered, and often is), *when* our earthly house of this tabernacle," *i. e.*, this body, made of the earth, "were dissolved," *i. e.*, *dies*, "we *have*," not *shall* have, ages hence, at the resurrection, but we *have* "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Beside, the earnest desire here expressed, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven, so that we shall not be found naked," shows that the thing desired was expected to take place at the moment of death. Moreover, with what propriety, or truth even, can it be said, that the resurrection-body is *in* heaven, or *from* heaven? And yet this is expressly affirmed, by the Apostle, in the text. "For in this," *this* body, "we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is

from heaven.” “A building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal *in* the heavens.” The resurrection-body comes, of course, from the grave. “All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth.” Again, how could the Apóstle add, in immediate connection with the text, “that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and willing rather to be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord?” The connection requires us to refer the whole that is affirmed, to the same time.

Hence also some, who supposed the passage referred to the resurrection, have inferred from it that there is no intermediate stage of activity and consciousness, but that the resurrection is the first thing of which the soul is sensible after the dissolution of the body. And so far as this passage is concerned, if this construction were correct, there is certainly force in the argument; though no point is more fully established, than that the soul is in a state of high activity between death and the resurrection. If there is any reference to the resurrection, it is found in the words, “that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” These expressions, it is true, are similar to those which the same Apóstle used in addressing the same Church, in a former letter, when expressly treating of the resurrection of the body, viz., “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Admitting that these words have reference to the resurrection, the reference is only incidental. It clearly was not

the leading idea of the text. And even in case of such reference, the Apostle had not allusion to the time of the resurrection, but only to the happiness which that event will cause to Christians, which led him to express a desire that if it might be, if it were consistent, he might not die at all, might not put off this body, but be at once invested with immortality; probably as Enoch and Elijah were, and as those will be who shall be alive on the earth at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I understand the expressions, "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." The mind of Paul evidently dwelt much on that state when the Christian, both as to his soul and body, should "be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The idea of being disembodied was evidently painful to him. He did not wish to be unclothed, or to lay aside the body. In itself considered, this is a painful event. Not as the mere agonies of dying are concerned, but as being unclothed, being without a body, being found a naked spirit. From all these considerations, and many others which time forbids us to mention, and which appear to me, at least, perfectly conclusive, I feel compelled to reject this interpretation.

A second interpretation of the passage under consideration is this: that it relates merely to the state of blessedness which the saints possess in the kingdom of

glory; and that, so far as the figurative language which the Apostle employs has any special appropriateness, as, "to be clothed upon with our house from heaven," or "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," it is all intended only to denote that the image of God, which was effaced by the apostasy, is fully and perfectly restored; a destitution of this image being a state of nakedness.

This is unquestionably a true representation, in very general terms, it must be admitted, of that state. It is certainly a state of blessedness, far surpassing the most elevated and enlarged conception of mortals. The image of God, which was entirely effaced by the fall, is fully and perfectly restored to the soul of the Christian at death. That image is of a moral nature, and consists in holiness, and is the soul's qualification for the enjoyment of heaven. For "without holiness, no man can see the Lord," *i. e.*, enjoy his presence. But if this be the meaning of the Apostle, in the text, he certainly employed very strange language, and very strange figures, to express it. It is certainly the only instance in which the image of God is denoted by a building, or a house. Nor can it be truly or intelligibly said, that the image of God is in heaven, ready to be enstamped, or to use the figurative expression of the Apostle, in the text, to be clothed upon the soul of the Christian at death; for he is speaking of what takes place after death, when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved; *i. e.*, when this

body dies. That image is impressed on the soul, faintly, it is true, in this life, or never. At death, that image is only rendered perfect. The soul of the saint is perfectly holy. The Christian bears the same image, in its nature, however, in his present, that he does in his future state. But the phrases, "earthly house of this tabernacle," and "building of God, an house not made with hands," express things entirely different in their very nature. But the construction now under consideration, makes them to denote things the very same in their nature, but differing only in degree. Believing that no inspired writer ever used language so loosely, to say the least, nor ever employed figures to which no appropriate meaning can be attached, we are equally compelled to reject this as the true interpretation of the text; although, as denoting a state of blessedness to the spirits of departed saints, the representation, expressed in general terms, is certainly true. We reject this construction only as not the one intended by the Apostle in the text.

The third interpretation of this passage is as follows. That, at death, the souls of Christians are invested with what is termed a celestial vehicle, like the shekinah, or visible glory in which our Saviour and Moses and Elias appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. And that this is that "building of God, an house not made with hands," with which the souls of saints are clothed upon, so as that they are

not found naked. This is said to have been the opinion of all the most eminent theological writers; and it is still the opinion of many modern commentators. Nor do any, so far as I am aware, who reject this opinion, pretend to adduce any direct argument against it from the Scriptures. For departed souls may still be regarded as spirits, although thus invested. The fact that they are divested of their mortal bodies, does not prove that they may not be invested with a spiritual body; for there is a spiritual body, as well as a natural body, although the Apostle applies these terms to the resurrection-body. The arguments by which this view is maintained, are these:

First, reason and analogy. That which is finite, must have limit. Limit implies form. Again, heaven is a place, and not a mere state of existence. Its inhabitants must have a visible appearance, or form, in order to sustain relationship to place. Still again, heaven is a place of society; society of the purest and happiest kind. But we have no conception of society, or social intercourse, distinct from the views above expressed; nor even the possibility of different beings recognizing each other, but through the medium of some external appearance. Now to all this it may be replied: "Ye do err, not knowing the power of God." God is able to accomplish all these objects, to enable pure spirits to recognize each other, and enjoy the purest society, without any external

medium of communication : in other words, without clothing spirits with bodies ; that is, in a way totally different from, and wholly beyond, any conceptions of which mortals are capable. It must be granted, however, that what God is able to do, is no argument on the present point ; for he does not do all he is able to do.

A second argument has been derived from the fact of the frequent appearance of angels, and especially that of Moses, with a visible form : “ The body of Moses, we are expressly told, was buried by God, in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor ;” yet he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, with Christ, and conversed with him. But this argument is not conclusive. For it may be replied, that his appearance on that occasion was for a particular purpose, and for which a visible form was important and necessary ; and God may have given him that form, on that occasion only, as angels assumed bodies on special errands to men. A special purpose was answered by rendering him the object of vision to Peter, James, and John, the only witnesses of that scene. The venerable Dr. Watts seems, however, to place no small confidence in the argument. And also, that there are certainly three immortal bodies now in heaven, those of the Saviour, Enoch, and Elijah, is a consideration of some weight, that all the now glorified have bodies similar to that in which Moses appeared.

A third argument is derived from certain expres-

sions and representations found in the Scriptures. The text is a prominent passage. It is strongly contended, that no intelligible meaning can be attached to the language which the Apostle here employs, but on the supposition that this construction is the correct one. The language is, indeed, highly figurative. And it is contended, that the figures are all Jewish; having reference to the tabernacle, the outward covering of the Ark of the Covenant, which on every removal was taken down, but which still left the ark surrounded with its own curtains: the inference, therefore, is, that as the ark, when the tabernacle was taken down, still was surrounded with its curtains, so the soul has some covering, at the dissolution of the body, and which is to continue till this tabernacle is rebuilt, or the body is raised, at the last day.

This might be regarded, however, a better argument in proof of the immortality of the soul, than the view it is designed to support. Moreover, this argument is made to depend on the word which is translated "*tabernacle*;" whereas, the original word means also, a *tent*, and is the very word which the Greek writers used to denote the tent of soldiers. And certainly, this body may, with as much propriety, be termed a *tent* as a *tabernacle*. But this admitted, and the above application of the figure is at once set aside. Beside, the Apostle tells us that this building of God, this house not made with hands, is eternal *in* the heavens, and is *from* heaven; to which expressions no intelligible

meaning can be attached, on the ground of this strict application of the figure. Nor on this supposition can a more intelligible meaning be given to the last verse of the text, viz.: "Not that we would be unclothed," *i. e.*, die, "but clothed upon, that *mortality* might be swallowed up of life." Mortality can only be predicated of the body. The soul is immortal. But, according to the above construction, the meaning of this verse would be, that this body might not only not die, but be at once covered or clothed upon with this building of God, this house from heaven; which is not mere jargon, but absurdity itself. Still it is not impossible, nor improbable, that the souls of Christians, in their intermediate state, have a substance and form, as Moses had, and that this form is the exact representation of the body dropped at death, surrounded by or emitting a visible glory; or of the raised body, which will be the same body, in all essential respects; and that it is the medium of recognition by each other; a body or covering, or by whatever name it may be called, adapted to the enlarged powers, the increased activity, and the new and happy employments of the justified made perfect. Nor are these views inconsistent with the other interpretations of this passage. We only maintain that this is not the *leading* sentiment of the text.

It only remains that we consider the fourth and last principal interpretation, which it seems possible to be given to our text, viz., that by this "building of

God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," is denoted the place of happiness to which the souls of the righteous are received at death, whether embracing the views last expressed or not; for the last construction does not militate at all against the one now given. The place at which the souls of Christians go at death, is denoted by a variety of terms or expressions. It is called Paradise, as when our Saviour said to the penitent thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It is called Abraham's bosom, as in the account of Lazarus, "And was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." It is called "mansions," as when our Saviour said to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions." It is called "a city," or rather is typified by a city, to which Abraham, by faith, looked. As where the Apostle says of him, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is called "New Jerusalem:" "The city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." "And he carried me away in the spirit," said John, "to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." It is also called heaven, as where it is said, "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." All these names and expressions undoubtedly denote the same place, viz., the place where the souls of the redeemed go at death, and dwell till the morning of the resurrection.

For each name, as you have perceived from the quotations above given, is mentioned in express reference to the fact, that the place denoted by such name is the dwelling-place of departed happy souls. Unless, therefore, the souls of the righteous go to different places, the same place is denoted by all the above names and terms of designation. But they are everywhere represented as constituting one family, one general assembly, one company, and as being where Christ is. But whether this place be heaven itself, or a different place, has been a subject of much diversity of opinion. Most, if not all the Fathers, believed that Paradise is not heaven itself, or that place where God most fully displays his glorious perfections and character. This was the belief of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John. His words are, "Paul and the rest of the Apostles are in the place appointed for them, with the Lord," meaning Paradise. And yet, from the account given of the visions of St. John, it would seem that heaven itself was the place of their dwelling between death and the final judgment.

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, says, "Not only in heaven, but in Paradise also, our Saviour shall be seen as men are worthy to behold him." Justin Martyr, a contemporary of Irenæus, says, "The souls of the just go to Paradise, and converse there with Christ by vision." And we have the assurance of one extensively acquainted with the writings of the Fathers, that "according to all antiquity, the souls of pious men,"

during the time of their bodies' sleep in the grave, "are in the place appointed for them, with the Lord, in Paradise, where they enjoy the sight and conversation of their Saviour, by way of vision." Yet from a comparison of two passages in the writings of St. Paul, in immediate connection with each other, Paradise and the third heavens, evidently denote the same place. Indeed, the two passages are a mere repetition of the same idea. Speaking of himself he says, "I knew a man in Christ, and such an one caught up to the third heaven." Again, "I knew such a man, and how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words." If one and the same event is meant in both these declarations, of which there seems to be no doubt, then Paradise and the third heavens must denote the same place. Or perhaps the latter includes the former. And this belief seems to be warranted, if not fully confirmed, by the declaration of our Saviour to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions;" the term "house," is obviously used in a more extensive sense than the term "mansions," and the former includes the latter. By some, the word house, in this passage, is supposed to denote the universe.

The resemblance between these words of the Saviour and those of the text is most striking: the term "house," in the latter, being used in a more limited sense, than which nothing is more common in the Scriptures. Let us present them both together.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions.” “We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The terms “building” and “house,” in the text, answering to the term “mansions,” in the Saviour’s declaration. And the term “house,” in the passage from our Saviour, answering to the term “heavens,” in the text. Both passages evidently refer to the same place; and they both refer to the same event; *i. e.*, to the admittance of the souls of the righteous, at death, to a place of happiness in heaven, denoted by these different terms. Well may they be affirmed to be eternal in the heavens, being embraced in that heaven, prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Nor with less propriety may this building, this house, these mansions, be said to be from heaven, agreeably to the declaration of our Saviour, “I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” And even still more so, if we compare the phrase “house from heaven” with the phrase “New Jerusalem,” denoting the same place, “which cometh down out of heaven, from my God.” Thus appropriately answering to the description in the text, as designating the same place. “Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.” It is proper, however, to observe, that the language of the text is highly figurative; and, therefore, we are not to subject it to a literal inter-

pretation. Yet, all such language has a definite meaning. And after all the attention we have been able to give to this confessedly most important and interesting passage of Scripture, we feel a full and unwavering confidence, that the last of the four interpretations which have been under consideration, is the correct one, and the one intended by the Apostle ; while it, of course, expresses a state of great, and, to mortals, inconceivable happiness, a happiness caused by a vision of the Redeemer's glory, though probably not so fully displayed, or not so fully perceived, as after the resurrection, when, we are given to understand, that the felicity of the redeemed will be greatly increased. The last, and which we deem the true interpretation, therefore, includes and implies the second. Nor is it inconsistent, in any important respects, with the third interpretation, viz., that the souls of Christians, at death, are invested with what has been termed a celestial vehicle, or an external, visible glory. The language of the text may be supposed as at least intimating, if not implying, this, but by no means to be restricted to this, nor as the principal truth or fact taught in the text. But that the Apostle had any reference to the resurrection, save it be a mere glance, as the final consummation of the saint's felicity, when mortality will be swallowed up of life, I cannot bring myself to admit. The whole may be presented, as I understand the passage, in the following sentence.

The souls of Christians at death, invested, probably, with an eternal visible appearance, like that of Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, go directly to heaven, or those eternal mansions in heaven which the Saviour has prepared for them, or that "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," where they enjoy the presence of their Saviour, and the society of holy angels and each other, until the trump of God shall announce the morning of the resurrection; when, accompanying the Son of God in his second coming to judge the world in righteousness, they shall come and take again their earthly house of this tabernacle, rebuilt, immortalized, and fashioned according to the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ; and after the scenes of that great last day, enter into that kingdom which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, where they shall forever dwell, under an increased and eternally increasing display and ever-increasing perception and growing admiration of the infinite glories of the eternal Godhead,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

1. Death is unspeakable gain to the Christian. The Apostle draws this very inference from the subject. "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,"—"which is far better." The child of God can suffer only in this life. And, though his

sufferings may here be severe, death terminates them all. But it is not to a state of negative good only to which death introduces him. The blow which puts an end to his troubles here, ushers his soul into the midst of ineffable joys. There is no intermediate state of slumber or inactivity to the immortal spirit. No sooner is his earthly house of this tabernacle dissolved, than the soul is, in the language of the text, "clothed upon with its building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" or enters those mansions which the Saviour has prepared for those who die in him. This is, indeed, the concurrent testimony of the Scriptures on this subject. No point is more fully established. But it follows, necessarily, from every correct view which can be taken of the passage under consideration. Nor is it even pretended, by those who deny such a state of high and holy activity and enjoyment, between death and the resurrection, that the Scriptures even intimate to the contrary, so far, at least, as I have seen. They regard it as a conjecture, founded on the consideration that the slumber, or, more properly, the temporary annihilation of the soul, would, of course, render it unconscious of loss. And the argument, if argument it can be called, is, that as the soul is not sensible or conscious of any loss, so there is no loss. On this ground, the absolute and eternal annihilation of the soul would be no loss. Of the fallacy of such talking or writing, for we cannot call it reasoning, we

need not stop to convince a child. There remains a rest to the people of God; there are joys for evermore, at his right hand; and this rest, these joys, commence at death. The mind of no mortal can conceive them, even in their incipient state. But they will be forever increasing. And, perhaps, the redeemed in their intermediate state will as little comprehend the increased glories which await them at the resurrection. What improvement ought Christians now to make of considerations like these? How glowing should be their gratitude to God, who has made them heirs to such an inheritance! How should they attest the sincerity of their gratitude, by habitual and universal obedience to his commands, and unremitting devotedness to the interests of his kingdom! How should they sustain and cheer them under all their disappointments, trials, and sufferings! How arrest and suppress all inordinate attachment to the perishable and transitory things of this world, and engage them faithfully to labor, "that whether present or absent, they may be accepted of him," as well as submissively and patiently endure whatever their heavenly Father and Redeemer "may lay upon them!" After a few more days of toil or suffering, or both, in their heavenward course, they will be called to dismiss these corruptible bodies, till the blessed morning when "mortality itself shall be swallowed up of life." In the meantime, their souls, invested, it may be, in all probability, if not certainty, with an external visible glory, are received

to those mansions which their Saviour has prepared for them. "Them will God bring with him, when he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead, in Christ, shall rise first."

2. Our subject, to Christians, is well calculated to divest death of many of its natural terrors, and comfort survivors, at the death of pious relatives and friends. Christians whose faith and hope are strong, are sometimes afraid to die. Nor is it the mere pains of dissolution which they dread. There is another cause of dread beside a separation of this body, and its commitment to the gloomy grave. It is the startling, and, I confess, awful thought, of becoming a naked spirit. It is a common, and probably a universal sentiment or feeling, with those at least who contemplate it with seriousness. The soul, indeed, is not dependent on the body for its existence or its happiness. But it still is unwilling to relinquish the idea of being embodied. It desires not to be unclothed. Nor is this dread or unwillingness scarcely less in regard to the departed souls of our kindred and friends. It is neither weakness, nor superstition, nor want of faith which occasions it. The idea of being a naked spirit was abhorrent to the feelings of the Apostle. Such is the idea which some of the most eminent divines have attached to his words, "Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house from heaven; if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked."

And although we cannot admit this to be the principal thought, it is not inconsistent with the leading sentiment of the Apostle, while it is rendered more than probable by many strong intimations. The ground of this opinion, as a Bible truth, is strong enough, to say the least, to warrant the belief and derive from it that consolation which it is calculated to afford. We know not, indeed, what it is. But we do know, in the case of Moses (to whom we have more than once referred), it distinguished him both from our Saviour, whose body was transfigured, and from Elijah, who never died, but was translated. Nor can it be proved from Scripture or reason, that the same is not true of all who die in the Lord. Those who have lost their children, for whose salvation they hope, pious friends will know how to appreciate a reflection such as this: who, though their earthly house of this tabernacle has been dissolved, are still the objects of distinct contemplation, although invested with a glory surpassing their conception. They may also look forward to a period, not indeed as distant, when with similar glory they will join them in the same building of God, and shall recognize each other as on earth, heirs together of the grace of life. Scarcely is there a sentiment which furnishes Christian mourners, in relation to their deceased pious friends, with a richer source of consolation. How must it assuage their grief in the parting moment; how dissipate the gloom which would otherwise hang over the grave; how diminish

the dread of their approaching dissolution! Yea, with what cheerfulness may they lay aside these bodies, to enter thus into their "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

That state is, indeed, very different from the present one. Still, all the representations of that world, and especially of its inhabitants, are in perfect accordance with the views here expressed. Read the visions of St. John, when called up to heaven. He tells us, he "beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands," &c. On the Apostle's asking who these were, the answer was, "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. And they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Much of this language is figurative, but it is descriptive of scenes long antecedent to the resurrection. It is a description of those who once dwelt on this earth, but at their death went to those mansions which their Saviour had prepared for them. We have authority

for saying that John saw things as they were to be. It was no fancy. It was a representation of what *was to be*, if not of what actually *was*. The inhabitants of that happy world were objects of distinct perception to the Apostle. They surely will not be less so to those happy beings themselves. While they had distinct forms, they were the forms of *men*; souls invested with a visible glory. Surely there is no sacrifice in laying aside these bodies, reasonable as may be the strong attachment to them, to be clothed thus, during the comparatively short period of dismissing them, and of receiving them again, fashioned according to the glorious body of Christ.

3. Our subject shows us the folly and sin of undue attachment to this world, and especially, of too much concern and attention to this perishable body. All the real importance which this whole world possesses, as each individual is concerned, is derived from the consideration, that it brings God more distinctly into view; displays many of his perfections; furnishes constant motives to gratitude, love, submission, and obedience, and is well adapted to mankind, as candidates for an endless existence beyond the grave. All its absorbing interests, its captivating charms proceed, not from anything in it really worthy of the affection or desire of an immortal being, in itself considered, but from a sinful conformity of taste and disposition on our part. It is not the decision of sober judgment in any man. It is the estimate of depraved, wild, un-

governable passion—that passion which makes of gold a god; which estimates self according to the distinction of a vain imagination; and prefers the gaze and admiration of men, to the favor and approbation of God. Nor would this passion receive even a check, but for the assurance that this whole world is destined to destruction; and more especially, that our residence in it is of short and most uncertain duration.

Where, then, is greater folly seen, especially, than in supreme attention to this frail and perishing body, in its present corruptible state? That body, so soon to be laid aside; so soon to be pressed by the clods of the valley; and the more it is pampered, only becomes the richer food for worms. Think of its origin! It came from the earth. It was made of the dust. An earthly house—a mere tabernacle—a temporary tent—subjected to innumerable accidents—the subject of pain and disease. Think of its end, its final end, as it now exists! “For flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Death returns it to the earth. These are facts, solemn facts, which God, its Maker and Disposer, has taught us; and which, so far as we are now capable of tracing or applying them, we daily find confirmed. And is such an origin, such an end, calculated to exalt these bodies in our estimation? These are, indeed, painful reflections. Such a doom, of such a companion, must be painful. But it is unavoidable. No solicitude, no caution, no skill can secure against it. “Our earthly house of this tabernacle” *must* “be dissolved.”

It is not, however, for the sake of producing pain that these reflections are made. Nor are we disposed to use degrading terms, as applied to this noble workmanship of a Divine hand. It is worthy of our care. It is deserving our attention. There is propriety in this, and religion demands it. There is a natural attachment to the body; an attachment, innocent and virtuous. With the Christian, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost. But that attachment, that attention may be excessive; and then it is sinful.

Here we would impose a check. Nor is this check found in the destiny of this body only. While its Maker has, as it were, pointed with one finger to the grave, as its final end, in its present constitution, he has with the other directed us to a more noble dwelling,—a habitation adapted to the immortal soul, when freed from all moral corruption, suited to the vastly increased energies of its faculties, in a place where the present body cannot enter—could not exist. Though divested of this body, the soul of the saint will not be found naked. The blow of death will crush this tenement in the dust; this earthly house will be dissolved, laid aside, because unadapted to such a tenant. But it has “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;” and though this denotes the dwelling-place of all who die in Christ, in the intermediate state of their existence they are where Christ is, and behold his glory; are objects of distinct mutual perception and recognition. They

occupy place, move in space, and are surrounded with a glory and a splendor of which we now have no conception ;—rich remuneration for the loss of this pained, decaying, corruptible body.

Our present subject, as we understand it, points us no farther ; nor is more needed to furnish us with the most powerful motives to arrest or prevent inordinate attachment to this world, or excessive attention to these frail and dying bodies. Yet, the views which other portions of Revelations afford us, do not terminate here. They stop not at death's door, nor death's immediate consequences. These, indeed, were deemed sufficient by the Apostle to sustain and comfort, and animate and urge to the greatest diligence and entire devotedness to the cause of Christ. And these obtained, all that can be desired is secured. Yet we may send our thoughts forward to a later period ; the period when Christ will come a second time, and bring with him all those who shall have slept in him ; when the bodies which were committed to the grave, in all essential respects the same, shall be raised, modelled after the glorious body of the Saviour.

4. The subject under consideration to-day, reminds Christians how near they are to those scenes which will soon employ all their thoughts ; near, not to death only, but to the glorious consequences which immediately follow the event. Our object in this reflection is not to cast a gloom over the mind ; it is not to present death arrayed in terrors, and speak of the

tender ties his hand dissolves. Death, indeed, must be passed. There is no other entrance upon the inheritance of saints in light. These bodies must be dismissed, before we enter the house from heaven. Two only have gone there without dying. No others may expect translation. All others must die, save that last generation that shall be found alive when it shall be announced "time shall be no more;" and they shall be changed,—a change equivalent to both death and the resurrection. But we would now have Christians for a moment forget that narrow passage through which they must, indeed, pass to glory, and reflect how near they this moment may be to all that fulness of joy which the immediate, unclouded presence of Christ, the interview and intercourse with friends who have gone before them to that place, and the society of all the just now made perfect, afford. To all this, every Christian in this assembly may be very near. And is it difficult to fix our thoughts there? On objects and scenes almost within sight; which, at least, the eye of faith can behold and survey? And does not the view kindle to higher degrees the spirit of devotion in our hearts? Weaken, if not for the time destroy, attachment to earthly things? Perhaps, too, there is no stronger or more decisive test of the character of our hopes. If faith is not strong enough to sustain us in such contemplations, is it not a doubtful point, whether we have faith at all? Or if, in such a prospect, a desire is not awakened to be "absent from the body and to be present

with the Lord," must we not doubt our interest in him, and preparation for that world of glory? Christians surely can have no near and distinct views of that world, and have no foretaste of its joys. Faith can never view the Saviour, in all the beauties and splendor of his glorified state, without exciting a strong, a supreme desire to be where he is, and see him as he is. It is such views too that assimilate to his likeness. This it is "with open face, to behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And when these objects of faith are withdrawn, or rather our views of them are arrested, as often they are, still if we have derived any benefit from them, in other words, if we have had any views of faith, they cannot fail to exert a happy influence over us. The effect will be seen and felt in less attachment to the world; in increasing heavenly-mindedness; greater firmness of Christian principle; a more faithful discharge of religious duties; a livelier interest in whatever is calculated to promote the cause of Christ. This it is to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." This also it is, as these views are habitual, "to have our conversation in heaven; from whence also, we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things

unto himself." It is well often to make these things objects of distinct contemplation. It is only when we are thus engaged, that any real desire for heavenly objects or heavenly employments is kindled in the soul. Nor is there any difficulty, even in the midst of our worldly engagements, in bringing these things within our view : the thought, that if we are Christians, we are near to them in all their reality, cannot fail to do so. Such is the condition of every Christian present. There is but a thin veil between him and the glories of that world. The hand of death removes that veil ; and between any of us and death, there is but a step.

As a source of motives, none furnishes more numerous or more powerful ones to constant watchfulness, greater activity, and more entire and untiring devotedness, than the subject which has been under consideration to-day. None is more frequently or urgently presented and enforced by the inspired writers, and especially by the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Nor can any stronger or more impressive motives be conceived, till we see as it were our very graves opening to receive these bodies ; or begin to experience the realities of that world whose interesting scenes have been the subjects of our contemplations. What Christian can slumber on in deathlike inactivity, or suffer himself to be engrossed and absorbed in the perishable, transitory, and unsatisfying enterprises and pursuits of earth, so near to that state of unspeakable

glory, to which his soul will be introduced? How lightly should this world sit to him, who has such prospects, and who is just about to realize infinitely more than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the heart of mortal can conceive! How constantly should the eye of faith be directed towards those eternal scenes, which he is so soon to see with open vision! How habitually should his thoughts and his conversation be in heaven, and his hands be employed in promoting those immortal interests, which ere long he can no more aid. Let us work while the day lasteth, for the night cometh when no man can work. What we do, must be done quickly.

But alas, these are the prospects of a part only of this congregation! Our discourse is addressed exclusively to the hopes of Christians. But surely, Christians are not the only ones who should feel a deep and solemn interest in it. Whatever concerns them is, in truth, matter of no less concern to others. The all-decisive point in their existence is no less near to sinners. Their earthly house of this tabernacle must with the same certainty be dissolved. But at that moment, sinners have no "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." They must be unclothed, but not clothed upon. At the moment of death, they will experience all the terrors of appearing naked spirits, in the presence of their great Judge. To them, too, there is no intermediate state of unconsciousness and inactivity. Like the

rich man, when they die, they will lift up their eyes, which denotes the keenest conviction of their eternally lost condition, in Hades, being in torments. Whatever place that word denotes or designates in the universe of God, it is one of misery. What may be the instruments or means of agony to such beings, out of themselves, we know not. We only know the fact of their awful condition, from the fearful language which inspiration employs to describe it. Nor will they always remain unclothed spirits. The same day, on the morning of which the bodies of the saints shall arise, their bodies too shall come forth. "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth." "I saw," says John, "the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (or Hades), delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every man according to their works; and death and hell (places for their inhabitants) were cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death." "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Yes, the souls of the wicked shall be brought from their intermediate place of torment, and their bodies shall be raised. But with what bodies will they come forth? Let the Bible answer. "They

shall be raised to shame and everlasting contempt." "They shall come forth," saith Christ, "to the resurrection of damnation." The application which those who have no saving interest in Christ should make of the discourse of to-day is, in all respects, the exact reverse of that which is appropriate to Christians. We need not recapitulate to show its bearing on such. The motives which were addressed to Christians to sustain and encourage and cheer them, are no less weighty to awaken and lead the sinners to repentance. Nor are they less appropriate; for if the endless glories of heaven, as motives, are suited to the former, the interminable woes of the latter are equally suited to the latter.

And as the Christian may, at any moment, enter upon the one, so may the sinner any moment begin to experience the other. That God will be pleased to accompany these considerations with his own irresistible influence, let us pray.

XXIV.

THE SOUL, AS AFFECTED BY THE DEATH OF THE BODY.

“Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”—JOB 14 : 10.

THE phrase, “man dieth and wasteth away,” can apply only to his mortal part; particularly to his body. For that only can “die and waste away.” The phrase, “man giveth up the ghost,” may denote the act of yielding up the soul, or the process of dying. The last clause, “where is he?” respects man as an immortal being; referring, especially, to his immaterial or spiritual part. By way of proof, or illustration, I need spend no time on the declaratory part of the text, that “man dieth and wasteth away;” that “he giveth up the ghost.” No proof beyond observation and the past history of a hundred generations can make it more certain; though no fact is more frequently declared in Divine revelation, while none, certainly, is more important. This great change will pass on all of us, and on all that shall live after us, down to that last generation, who, instead of dying, will be “changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” This great

change, however, is not confined to the body. It must necessarily affect the spirit. It ushers it into a new state of existence. It becomes at once conversant with new beings, new objects, new scenes.

When death has laid his hand on man, we know what becomes of the body. It is laid in the grave, there to waste away and be resolved into its original dust. But death does not extinguish the spirit. That is indestructible, imperishable, immortal. But where is it? What is it? In reply, I answer,

1. So far as personal identity or moral character is concerned, man is the same after, as before the body's death; the same rational, thinking being. Whatever the place or mode of his existence, the mental faculties are not destroyed. He has memory to recall the past; reason adapted to all its appropriate operations; conscience to judge, to approve, or condemn; while his consciousness tells him that he has always been the same individual person, through all the various stages of his existence. Indeed, instead of being impaired, we have every reason to believe that all his mental powers will be vastly expanded and invigorated, when released from the restraints of the body. True, the reverse might be the conclusion of the senses. But we are not left to the testimony of the senses, or the conclusions of reason. God himself has condescended to instruct us on this momentous subject. He has placed the doctrines of the soul's

immortality and its activity after death on the firmest ground.

Nor is there less full or less clear evidence, that death produces no essential change of moral character. At that hour, the plain declaration of God's word is, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Probation is limited to this life. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." "After death, comes the judgment." Indeed, the whole plan of salvation is evidently founded on the fact, that eternal life must be secured in this world, or never secured. All the motives to immediate repentance; all the solemn admonitions on the uncertainty of this life, and remonstrances against delay, are drawn from that fact; while there is not a hint in all the Bible, that an offer of salvation was ever made, or ever will be made, to a departed spirit.

It is then the same being that wakes up in eternity, who at death leaves this world; possessing the same powers or mental faculties, though vastly expanded, and sustaining the same moral character. Hence,

2. The soul when it leaves the body passes to an unalterably fixed condition. There is no reason why it should not be so, if the character is wholly formed in this life, as we have seen that it is.

With all the writers on this subject who believe the soul to be immortal, there has been, as clearly there can be, but one possible conjecture in opposition to this statement. And that is, that between the events of the death and the resurrection of the body, the soul lies in a dormant state; a state in which all its powers are suspended. And what is this but a state of annihilation? It is utterly inconsistent with the idea of the soul's immortality; which means, not only the everlasting existence of the soul, or eternal duration, but its continued, uninterrupted existence. Moreover, the very language is unintelligible. What is the soul, when all its faculties cease their exercise? So far at least as we can form any idea of the soul, it consists of its various faculties. If it cannot think, nor will, nor remember, nor reason, nor know, it is nothing—it is annihilated. These are its essential attributes; without them, we can form no idea whatever of the soul. If it exist again, it is, therefore, a new existence. This view, I scarcely need say, is entirely inconsistent with the teachings of the inspired volume.

We have abundant information respecting the soul after, and immediately after, it leaves the body; both in regard to the righteous and the wicked. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is conclusive. The declaration of the Saviour to the Sadducees, who denied the existence of the soul after death, confirms the same fact: "God is not the God of the dead, but

of the living;" and hence, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom the reference was made, were still living beings, though their bodies had been slumbering many centuries in their graves.

Thus we have seen that man, as to his better part, will continue to exist after death has crushed his body into the dust, in the exercise of all its mental powers; that his moral character will then be unalterably formed; his condition unchangeably fixed; no change but either that of mounting upward, in enlarged knowledge and augmented happiness; or, under the weight of accumulating guilt, sinking lower and lower in the pit of endless woe.

3. But where is he? Where, as to place, as well as condition? for the one necessarily implies the other. I answer, in one of two places, for there is not a third; and these are fitted to the only two essentially different characters of men, or they to them, as formed in this life, and completed at death. In Scripture, they are each called by different names: as, Abraham's bosom, Paradise, Mansions, Heaven, Tophet, Prison, Outer-darkness, Hell, and perhaps some others.

Nor is there any foundation for the notion that the souls of all, both renewed and unrenewed, go to one place at death, and there remain till the resurrection and judgment; which place they understand by the word Paradise. But St. Paul tells us that Paradise is only another name for Heaven; and even the third Heavens, which the Jews always regarded as denoting

the place of endless and ineffable bliss. In his second Epistle to the Corinthians, twelfth chapter, he writes : “ I knew a man in Christ, above fourteen years ago, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth ; such a one caught up to the third heavens. And I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth ; how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter.” Here Paul evidently means the same place by “ the third heavens” and “ Paradise ;” and no less plainly as a place of supreme felicity. He was there relating, too, his own experience. He was himself that man in Christ who was thus favored, though it occasioned the thorn in his flesh, “ lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations.”

It is certain, from Christ’s own words, that Christians at death go where he is, to those mansions which he had prepared for them, and where they should behold his glory, and see him as he is. But he ascended to “ the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” That saints at death go there, the Apostle writes to the Thessalonians. “ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” “ Therefore, we are always confident,

knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Let me refer you to a familiar portion of our Saviour's instruction when on earth. "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." The resurrection had not arrived; that generation had not passed away. He was not referring to what was at some future period to be, but stating what already was. For, hear that rich man in his last urgent petition: "I pray thee, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

Everything is here represented as occurring immediately after death. The joy of the one and the misery of the other, at once followed that event. The whole is clear. It seems to defy ingenuity to place a different plausible construction on that representation.

No doubt, the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked will be greatly enhanced at the resurrection. Nor will this cease to be the case at any period of their existence. The righteous will eternally be soaring aloft toward the infinite God, and the wicked forever sinking lower and lower in the pit of woe!

One thought more of deep interest is suggested by the question, "Where is he?" It is evidently, however, in sense and meaning, an exclamation rather than a mere inquiry. And it is this thought I wish to present. It is as much as to exclaim, "Alas, where is he!" While it conveys the idea, that the event of death, the exit of the soul out of the body, is the most important, most deeply interesting, and deeply solemn moment of our existence, it conveys the idea of surprise and doubt—surprise at the vastness, the entireness of the change which then instantly passes upon one, and doubt, while that change is passing, what objects and scenes are in a moment more to present themselves to the clear and open vision of the immortal spirit! And in numberless instances, awful doubt whither it is going, what is to be its final and endless destiny! Is it possible to conceive of a moment of deeper solemnity? It may be, and it probably is the case, that every departing soul is freed from all doubt, as to its having or not having a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, before the last moment comes. We have the best evidence that this is true of many a Christian in the dying hour. Long previously, and down to the expiring moment, they have expressed a joy, a confidence, an earnest of heaven, which they had never before experienced. The very countenance bore testimony to the truthfulness of their declarations. It was inconceivable that they could be deceived. And though all Christians

are not thus highly favored and blest, yet he that is a present help in every time of need, will not be absent from a child of his in the moment of his greatest extremity. Ofttimes, indeed, there is much darkness, many doubts in the last hours of the sincere believer. But ere the soul takes its flight, it is more than probable that the Saviour visits him with the smiles of his countenance, and goes with him through the valley of death, or sends his angels to convey him to heaven. Yet to the best-prepared Christian for the event, there is much, yea, everything most deeply to affect him, to fill him with surprise and wonder. He can have no conception of the greatness of the change to pass upon him, till he experiences it. What can he know of the mode of his existence when he has laid aside this body? By what means he shall hold intercourse with others like himself—with angels—with the Saviour, whom he will see face to face?

Every Christian must wake up with surprise in eternity. "Where is he?" Where am I? In a new world! Himself, almost a new being! Everything new around him, and within him, save that grace, of which, in a low degree, he was here the subject, and the feeble views of faith which that grace enabled him in some favored moments to have. But now wholly sanctified, O what a change! Such we may readily suppose were the reflections of Job when he exclaimed, "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he!" But if it be thus with the Christian most eminent for his

piety, who habitually lives in view of that world which he is soon to enter, and like Job, is waiting for the change before him, what must it be to the ordinary Christian; the doubting and doubtful Christian; the unfaithful, oft-offending, too worldly-minded Christian? What surprise will seize the soul as it enters eternity!

But numerous as these instances may be, they are few compared with the multitudes who come to that hour in utter thoughtlessness of what awaits them when that hour is past! Who have never made the scenes of eternity the subject of serious contemplation, or even any at all. When such a one is called from time into eternity, how natural, how irrepressible the thought at least, "Where is he?" Where is the immortal spirit that has fled? What are the scenes upon which it has entered, even before the lifeless body is conveyed to its grave, there to waste away, till the announcement of the resurrection awake it from its slumbers.

It is not the prerogative of man, indeed, to pronounce on the eternal destiny of any soul. But the wicked die. And dying thus, if there is truth in God's book, they are forever lost! They wake up, where the Judge of all himself said the rich, impenitent man did, when he died. Some may be found, even among such, who are sustained with a false hope to the expiring moment. Others disbelieve a hell, and even deny the immortality of the soul. Others comfort themselves with

the delusive notion of a universal salvation, and that the best have no advantage over the worst. Others again place their dependence on their morality and their almsdeeds. Still others come to that hour with consciences seared as with a hot iron, in utter insensibility; while others are cut off with a stroke, and have not a moment for reflection, or are bereft of reason; millions, too, are wickedly made to believe in the efficacy of masses, or at worst, the purifying fires of an imaginary purgatory. What multitudes come to their death in these various ways! What, O what must be their surprise when they wake up in the other world; when they see all their hopes forever dashed; their vain expectations driven away like the chaff before the wind! Yes, in all these ways, men come to their death-hour. Nor are they exclusively from heathen lands. Ah, gladly would they exchange conditions with the vilest who lived and died without the Gospel. But they will come from Christianized nations; from Gospel-enlightened assemblies; from the very sanctuaries of God! where the sound of the Gospel had often saluted their ears, and the offer of life had often been pressed on their acceptance. They will carry with them all their knowledge of the great plan of salvation which they here acquired, and the clearest recollection of their opportunities for securing an interest in it, into eternity, and to the bar of God.

— We, my hearers, are approaching that solemn hour, in which the destiny of man, as recorded in the text,

will be our destiny and doom. We shall die, and our bodies waste away in the grave, till the voice of the Son of God shall open every grave. The same process of dying which those who have gone before us have gone through, we will go through. And by some at least of those who shall attend our funeral, while standing around our encoffined remains, will the question be mentally put, or the thought silently pass the mind, "Where is he?"

Shall it be a question of a doubtful nature? of doubtful answer? We have all of us, sometimes, been present on such an occasion, when we felt authorized to repeat over the grave of the deceased, that divinely inspired eulogium, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." But, alas, how often is it otherwise! How often, at least, are we compelled to feel a painful doubt, with regard to the eternal destiny of the departed spirit! In life they gave no evidence of an interest in Christ. They came to their last sickness in all their indifference, and passed into the dark valley without a ray of hope! My hearers, how shall that question be answered over our lifeless bodies? "Where is he?" It is a solemn question. It is a pertinent question. And, though no response will come from the eternal world, yet it is a question of solemn, practical bearing on the living. Were it an idle one, it had never found a place in the in-

spired Book. But we need not that proof of its practical pertinence. It brings to our view the solemn realities of that eternal world, to which we are rapidly hastening, and which we shall soon enter. It reminds us of the preceding scenes of our own dying hour, and when those scenes are over, of our souls' immediate entrance on their changeless, eternal state. And whence, if not from these solemn considerations, shall we derive motives to prepare us for the one, and for the other? Our existence was given us, and our lives have been spared to this hour, to prepare, on leaving this, to enter a better world; to prepare for a heavenly world. For this, the present opportunity is afforded us. For no other kind purpose have we been spared to see this day; and, rightly improved, this would be secured beyond the possibility of failure.

XXV.

THE GREAT VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 Cor. 15 : 55-57.

It is impossible for the human mind, at least in its present state, to conceive loftier thoughts, or human language to express them in more exalted strains, than are set forth in the words which I have just read. Wider extremes cannot be imagined, of all that is terrible and all that is joyous. They are the extremes of sin and holiness; of death and life; of corruption and immortality; of hell, and of heaven. And more striking imagery by which to paint them, is not furnished in either world. The infinite Spirit alone could have suggested or dictated it. And if we would be instructed and profited by it, we must resign ourselves to serious, devout, and solemn contemplation.

We must go back to the death of Abel, the first of our race that died, and think over the countless millions who have bowed to his stroke; the victims that are now falling before his onward march; the

multitudes who are yet to be born, that they may die; the gathering of the last generation to their graves. And then, on that last closing point of time, listen to the voice which will call them all to life again, and behold them rising from their beds of dust, and especially that redeemed throng that slept in Jesus, exultingly singing as they ascend, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." These are the first notes of the new song to be sung in heaven. We, as well as others, however, are mortal, and must die. But we, too, shall rise again, and shall swell the number of those who sing this triumphant song of victory over death and the grave, or of those whose lips will be sealed, or opened only to utter the wailings of the eternally lost!

My object will be to present some of these points for our consideration, in the order, however, of a connected series.

1. The striking appropriateness of the figure here employed, to describe the nature and consequences of sin. Sin is here compared to the stroke of a venomous serpent, whose poison is fatal. When once infused, it soon penetrates the whole system. Its direct tendency and constant progress is to a fatal termination. So sin is a deadly poison. It affects the whole man, moral and physical. It is constantly advancing

towards a fatal termination. The weight of disease is constantly increasing, till it becomes insupportable. Sin is a poison which infects every source of worldly enjoyment. There is no earthly comfort which it does not affect. It extorts every groan that is uttered; causes every sigh that is heaved; draws every tear that is shed; inflicts every pain that is felt. All the bodily ills, the mental agonies, the various trials and afflictions of our race, come of this subtle, this deadly poison. These things, in greater or less severity, are common to the righteous and the wicked. Sin introduced a threefold death: natural, spiritual, and eternal. The seeds of each are implanted in all at the earliest stage of human existence. The symptoms of the body's dissolution cluster around the youngest infant, and develop a fatal termination at every age. There is a pang at every instance of dissolution, even though the subject of it is unconscious of everything but of simple existence. But his ravages are not confined to such. No age, no prospects can plead exemption. When viewed at the greatest distance that any dare to place him, death is a fearful foe; and every style of approach discloses new terrors. Indeed, he can never properly be regarded at a distance. He walks by the side of every living being. The whole life may be considered as a struggle with him. He watches at every step to hurl a fatal dart. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither

hath he power in the day of death ; and there is no discharge in that war." But what though multitudes are raised up from the bed of sickness, or have seldom or never been laid there, yet, in this dying world, they have often seen Death fix his image on others. They have felt, too, the blow by which the strong and tender ties have been cut asunder. Who has not sometimes found himself at the bedside of a dying friend, and among the mourners that slowly and sadly followed that friend to his last, long home ? These are but a few of the effects of sin, as limited to a small portion of one's own history. And is there no sting in them ? Is it in human nature to be utterly indifferent to them ? It may not produce agony in all. It may not deprive of food and rest ; yet, how often has it done so. It may not arrest or moderate their eagerness for the world, its pursuits, or its pleasures. It may increase that eagerness. They may seek relief in new engagedness. But moments of seriousness must sometimes come. They must be moments of pain. But there is another death, of which this death of the body cannot fail to remind them. It is the death of sin, or rather in sin ; a state of guiltiness before God.

This may not always, may indeed be seldom realized. For it is a state of blindness, as well as of guiltiness. Yet it may be oftener felt than we see the evidence of it in others, or the sinner be willing to acknowledge it in himself. There is a monitor in the

breast of every man that forbids undisturbed repose. Conscience will act, will accuse, and condemn, in spite of inclination, and every art to lull it to sleep. It is a foreboder of evil to the sinner. It will accuse where it cannot excuse. Its accusations often produce agonies with which no pains of the body can compare. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" But this death is connected with a death still more awful,—a death, the worst forebodings of which are far more than realized. It is the second death. Ah, is there no sting, no agonies, in the gnawings of that worm that never dies? No pains in the burning of quenchless fires? This is the doom of all who live and die in sin. Yes, the sting of all these deaths is sin.

How appropriate, how apt, how expressive the simile which the Apostle has employed,—“The sting of death is sin.” But for that poison, earth had all been a paradise. No death, no pain, not an ill had been known.

Look back upon the desolations which for six thousand years have been visited on our world: the nameless individual evils and public calamities; the pains of sickness; the bereavements of death; the agonies of a wounded spirit; and then look down through the avenue which revelation has opened, into the pit of eternal despair;—all, all the legitimate fruits and results of sin, and say, has it no sting?

2. A second topic of remark furnished us in the

text is, the cause of such mighty power in sin to overwhelm and crush the immortal soul. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities." There is often, at least, a vigor, a resolution of mind, which shrinks not at the most cruel tortures which can be inflicted on the body; which can brave death in its most terrific forms. It has often challenged ingenuity to invent cruelties which could overpower the mind of the sufferer. And yet the sting of sin has unnerved the stoutest hero, and completely prostrated all his energies. What gives it this mighty power? Paul tells us in the text, "The strength of sin is the law." The law of God is the simple instrument by which this is effected. One incident in the history of that Apostle furnishes proof and illustration of this fact; and the experience of multitudes abundantly confirms its truth. Read the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "I had not known sin, but by the law. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

The law of God is perfectly adapted to the moral nature of man. It and the conscience were made for each other. No physical law is more absolute and exacting than the moral law of God. Even the comparatively slight impression of it on the nature of man, in the absence of all knowledge of its written

form, has a power which can deprive of all peace; will at least operate either to accuse or excuse. So teaches the same Apostle, and the experience of every heathen attests the truth of what he taught. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law (*i. e.* in its written form), are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another."

The law, therefore, is the instrument of conviction. While it points out what is right, it condemns what is wrong. And when the Spirit of God applies it to the sinner's conscience, it cannot but produce agonies. It is the law that conveys to the sinner the anger of God, and shows him how justly it is deserved. And who can stand against Jehovah's anger, even when kindled but a little? The application of the Divine law to the conscience of the sinner, will just as certainly, and as naturally, produce torment, as the application of fire to the naked body will produce pain. Hence, the element of fire, and its action on material substances, are often employed to set forth the power of conviction, or the agony that is produced by the anger of God, through the application of his law, both in this world, and that which is to come. For whatever else may be added, the law of God will be an instrument of torment to the finally lost in eternity. It

is the fire and the hammer to break in pieces the heart of stone in the bosom of the sinner, often, at least, in this life. God, too, is a consuming fire, especially to lost souls. "They shall be tormented in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

A perfect application of the Divine law requires a perfect recollection and knowledge of one's whole moral history. This is not had in the present state of existence. But a few, comparatively, of one's sins are remembered in this life, and those chiefly of the most glaring character. Hence, conviction, when experienced at all, is first produced in view of some more aggravated violation of God's law. It deepens as the heart is laid open to view. And there never is that conviction which is connected with conversion, till that source and sink of iniquity is exposed to view. Then it is that the truth of God's word is realized, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." While the law reveals to the sinner his heart as well as his life, it comes armed with the most awful curses. These curses are not denounced against the whole of one's life, as though the aggregate of one's sins only deserved them, but against each sin, considered separately. Each sin is felt to deserve eternal death. The language of the law is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the

law to do them." "He that offends in one point is guilty of all," *i. e.*, exposes himself to all the curses of the law, broken in all its precepts, or not observed in all its requirements. Ah, what immense strength do all these considerations add to sin—to its clear and full disclosures by the law of God! Who can stand under such a weight as this? The consciousness of a single sin sometimes crushes the sinner into the dust. How overwhelming when all the sins of heart and life, like so many mountains, press upon his soul! And this is the work of the law. The law gives to sin its strength,—“For where there is no law, there is no sin.” What truer, or more awful declarations can be found in all the word of God, than that “the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law!” But,

3. Our text announces to us a triumphant and glorious victory over sin, death, and the grave. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here is both a challenge and a shout of triumph. The one expresses a confidence of success far beyond what any but a Christian ever felt; the other points us to the ground of that confidence, the “Lord Jesus Christ.” It was, indeed, the exulting language of one of the “chiefest of the Apostles.” Yet it is language, bold and confident as it is, which the weakest babe in Christ may utter as his own. There are two leading thoughts presented.

1. The completeness of the victory. It is victory

over the sting of death, and victory over the grave. They may be regarded as distinct and separate enemies, and yet combining their power to hold in subjection a common victim. The whole conception is one of unsurpassed sublimity, and the representation, by words and imagery, of no less unsurpassed simplicity and grandeur. But the leading thoughts are level with the capacity of a child. Let me state a few of them.

The chief, the most deadly sting of sin, may be at once extracted. All its dreaded consequences, it is true, cannot be prevented nor arrested. It has, for instance, doomed the body to the grave; and to this decree every living man must bow. But not only may all its ravages, its fatal effects on the soul, be forever arrested when its poison has worked the body's death, but even that fatal blow to the body may be turned to the soul's happiness and eternal deliverance from every evil. The very hand that unlocks the grave for the body, may unlock also the gate of Paradise to the immortal soul. All this is effected by the sinner's repentance. Pardon restores to favor, and the favor of God cannot fail to give peace. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." The deepest sting of sin consists in the sentence of condemnation. Freedom from that is effected by repentance. "For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." This,

however, is but the foretaste of that joy which follows perfect sanctification.

2. This victory over sin includes eternal exemption from all the curses of a broken law. Here the poison of sin strikes deeper than to sting the body and send it to the grave. It infuses itself into the soul. The soul as well as the body became subject to death. "The soul that sinneth shall die." It, therefore, fell under the curse of a violated law. This curse is raised from the soul of every believer. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "They have passed from death unto life." "He that believeth on him shall not be condemned." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." In other words, what the law could not do (and it could not free the soul from its own sentence of condemnation), Jesus Christ has accomplished, in behalf of every believer in him. This entire acquittal, however, does not take place in this life, so as to relieve from all consciousness of the law's condemnation. This is reserved to the hour of death, and to be publicly announced at the judgment. But there is the certainty of it to every true believer in Jesus Christ. He shall never come into condemnation. He hath passed from death to life.

3. But there is a still more glorious victory over sin which every Christian will achieve. The victory over sin is complete when it has sent the body to the grave. For the believer at death ceaseth from sin. Death on him has struck his last blow ; and by it has eternally emancipated the soul from its power. Death, indeed, hands over to the grave. But the grave itself shall be conquered. It shall restore every trophy which it had ever gathered. The grave is conquered by the resurrection: It is the believer's last enemy ; and this is reserved for the last day of time. It is the closing scene of this world. All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." What a day of triumph will that be to Christians, to all who slept the sleep of death in him !

And here is suggested, as already intimated, a second leading thought, viz., through whom this victory over sin and death and the grave is achieved. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is by Christ that death, in its threefold form, is deprived of his sting : through him the death of the body is bereft of its terrors. The believer may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil. The Great Conqueror himself goes with him. The body itself is but an appendage of the person. It is not essential to his existence or his happiness.

Moreover, it is laid aside for a season only, to be called back to life, clothed with all the splendors of its glorious pattern.

Christ, too, by his atonement, has extracted the poison which gives to death its worst sting. It procures the pardon of sin. For this he became incarnate, and died on the cross. "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." He, too, has become the resurrection and the life. As he rose, so shall all they that sleep in him, and come forth, in bodies fashioned like to his own glorious body. What a complete and perfect victory is that!

And now, what is the practical bearing of our whole subject? For here is wrapped up all the benefit to us, of this, or any other point of revelation. And what other can possess greater weight to the Christian? In what circumstances can he be placed, and not perceive and feel its adaptedness? We cannot, at this time, trace it in its various bearings on the Christian's present state. But how should it arouse the sleeping Christian? How admonish the slothful Christian? How cheer the afflicted Christian? How should it dry up the tears of the bereaved, mourning Christian? How support and comfort the dying Christian? How does it enforce all the obligations which are due to the Son of God, by whom all these various and endless blessings are secured and freely bestowed? But has it no bearing on a different class? Have sinners no interest in it? To them the sting of death remains,

in all its unalleviated force, while they remain impenitent; and if impenitent till the death of the body, the last link of hope, that sting increasing in agony as the ages of eternity roll on. Death will be forever deepening his terrors on both body and soul. For though their bodies, too, will be raised from the grave, it will be "to shame and everlasting contempt;" and "both soul and body be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Seasonable repentance, or all this is the only alternative. Glories and terrors, beyond the mind of mortal to conceive, here combine to enforce this all-essential condition. Repentance, or this threefold death, in all its awful aggravations.

END OF VOL. I.

